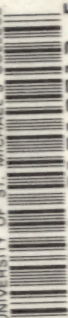
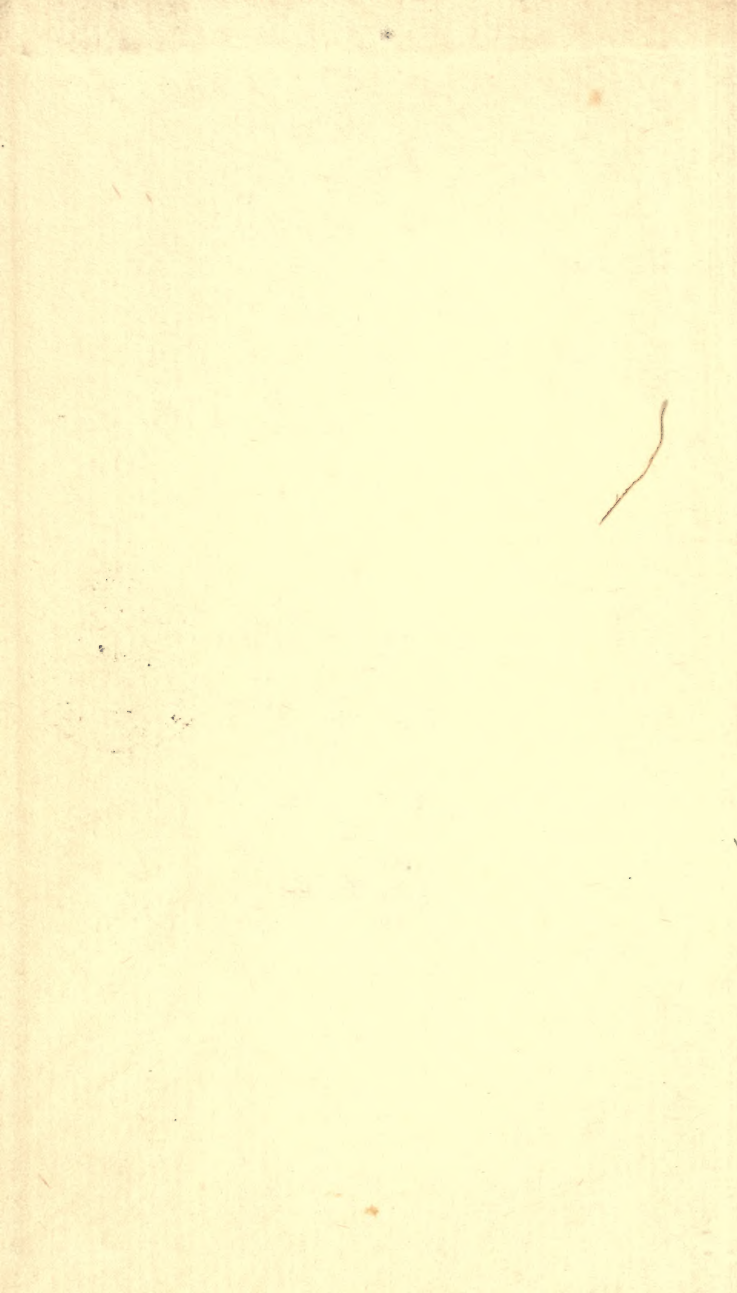


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A. M. D. G.

TRANSFERRED

LETTERS

ON

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

(FIRST SERIES)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD
AND THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

BY

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.



VOL. I.

SEVENTH EDITION

R. & T. WASHBOURNE, LTD.

PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

AND AT MANCHESTER, BIRMINGHAM, AND GLASGOW

BENZIGER BROTHERS: NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

1914

FEB - 4 1957

Nihil Obstat.

ALEXANDER CHARNLEY, S.J.,
M. J. BIDWELL,
Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur.

EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vicarius Generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 5 Decembris, 1910.

The attention of the Reader is called to the *inserted* Appendix concerning the duties of Parents and others in the matter of *Children's First Communion* under the recent Decree, 'Quam Singulari,' of August 8, 1910.

PREFACE

THE volume here presented consists of little else than a reprint, with slight rearrangement, of the 'Letters on Christian Doctrine' which, for a few years past, have been appearing monthly in the pages of the *Stella Maris* magazine, supplement to the English *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. These 'Letters' are here collected for the first time, by the kind permission of Father D. Bearne, S.J., editor of both the aforesaid monthlies.

It seems but due to the widely cherished memory of the late Father John G. Gretton, S.J., that the writer should disabuse his many kind and encouraging readers in the past of any impression they may have gathered that with him originated the idea of issuing 'Letters' of the present kind. It was Father Gretton who first conceived the same and embodied it in a series of 'Monthly Letters to Catholic Seamen,' published in leaflet form at the *Messenger* Office, Wimbledon. The writer did no more than take up the work at the point where Father Gretton had discontinued it—namely, at the end of the Third Commandment of the Decalogue—and at the time when the original leaflet had, under Father Bearne's editorship, developed into a prosperous magazine—the *Stella Maris*.

But as the said monthly leaflets were penned chiefly for seamen, it seemed advisable for the purposes of this collection to rewrite the explanations of the first three Commandments, as well in order to meet the needs of a wider and more miscellaneous circle of readers as for giving greater homogeneity of treatment to the whole series.

The writer seizes this occasion for expressing his gratitude for the very kindly appreciation of his modest efforts manifested in various quarters, both lay and clerical. Except for this, and the increasing demands for the entire collection of 'Letters' which have followed, he would hardly have ventured to put this volume forward.

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.

MOUNT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,
CHESTERFIELD,
Lady Day, 1905.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE hearty reception accorded to the First Edition of these 'Letters' by laity and clergy alike has necessitated a Second. In introducing the latter, the author calls attention to the correction and enlargement of a passage on p. 280, concerning the Statute of Limitations, which had been too briefly and baldly worded, and hence was liable to convey a false impression favourable to laxity of conscience.

*Feast of the Immaculate Conception,
December 8, 1905.*

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LETTERS ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

INTRODUCTION: ON FULLER RE- LIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

THE aim of these Letters on Christian Doctrine is to supplement the more elementary instruction in Catholic belief and morals which is afforded by the ordinary annotated Catholic Catechism, and in some respects to go beyond the range of excellent manuals of religious instruction in which the Catechism receives fuller development. This programme clearly implies that the present Letters are designed mainly for such as are already past childhood, and who are either drawing towards full age or perhaps have already entered upon the serious work of life.

Not every grown-up Catholic has enjoyed the benefit of as thorough instruction in early life as would have been desirable. A good deal may yet remain for them to learn. Even in the case of those who are upon the whole well informed as to

Imperfect
know-
ledge.

the practice of their religion, gaps in knowledge may still remain in places needing to be filled up, and long-standing misconceptions on some points may still survive which have never chanced to be dispelled by public instructions and sermons. As for those who hold their religious equipment to be complete *cap-à-pie* once they have passed their 'standards' or gone through a few years of college education, and who never go to sermons, it need scarcely be said that their knowledge must be far from complete. People could, of course, remedy their deficiency by applying to priests and confessors. But inquiry supposes doubt, or at least a misgiving, and even the best intentioned are often all unconscious of their shortcomings. So it commonly happens that no questions are asked. Thus their deficiency may become settled and permanent, and also spread itself to others who depend upon them for light and guidance. Be this as it may, there seems to be a fairly large field of information which may profitably be opened out to Catholics generally, instead of being reserved as a private hunting-ground for the confessor and professional theologian.

Is ignorance
bliss?

The object of these papers, as above declared, may possibly suggest a difficulty to some. 'Is such fuller practical instruction,' it may be asked, 'at all advisable?' Is it not better not to know too much about such matters as the Commandments of God and the laws of the Church? For fuller knowledge increases one's responsibilities, and has an uncomfortable way of limiting one's liberty of

action. 'Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise.'

But is ignorance always bliss? It may be—that is, when entailing no evil effect upon the ignorant. A man is often happier for not knowing all the harsh and uncharitable criticism that rages behind his back. But he would not be deemed happy for being unaware that he was standing close to an infernal machine with its fuse already lighted, nor for being ignorant of some golden opening to a fortune. In short, where ignorance detracts from our well-being here or hereafter, it cannot be rationally accounted as bliss, except of the kind that constitutes the beatitude of the 'fool's paradise.'

In other departments of knowledge apart from religion, which make for self-development and improvement, men do not consider ignorance a synonym for bliss. This is evident as regards education. The proverb we have been discussing would be singularly unsuited to the present time, when effort to provide ever-increasing educational facilities is being carried to a pitch verging, as it may seem to many, upon mania. What is the principle upon which education rests? That the greater well-being of man consists in the fuller cultivation and expansion of his powers and faculties—a result which is to be reached by imparting wider knowledge to his intellect, and so promoting more intelligent action for the various ends of life. Moreover, except in the eyes of those who regard education solely as a means for accumulating £ s. d.

more rapidly, and who overlook its highest purpose, education aims at developing the *moral* side of man and of directing his *will*-power so that the latter may work along the lines of right moral conduct in all the relations of life.

Now, the first and foremost of the relations of human life is unquestionably that which man bears towards Almighty God, the Giver and Supporter of life. Sound Christian education, therefore, must chiefly aim at guiding a man in the path of *religious* duty, and the more perfectly it does this, the more perfect will the education be.

But how shall a man fully acquit himself of this his paramount duty except his mind be fully instructed as to its requirements? He is destined finally for the supernatural possession of God in Heaven. He must, therefore, *operate towards God* in life by fulfilling the Divine Will as made known to him through the teaching, laws, and decrees of the Catholic Church.

Further, the *degree* of his ultimate bliss in the possession of God for eternity must necessarily depend upon the fulness of his service of Him on earth, and the measure of that service cannot, in normal circumstances, exceed the measure of his acquaintance with its obligations. Ignorance, therefore, of the Divine behests means the reverse of bliss. It means the loss of it—if not in substance, at least in degree. And if only the last, no one can rationally desire to escape fuller religious knowledge, through whatever channel and in whatever form obtainable.

But the objection to more complete instruction may present itself in a somewhat different form, and be urged in quite another spirit. A mind—such as we have just considered—that prefers ignorance of Divine or ecclesiastical ordinances, with a view to ‘saving trouble,’ betrays a certain religious sloth and indifference. There is another class of mind which doubts the expediency of more complete religious knowledge out of zeal for the honour of God. More perfect knowledge of duties—so the objection runs—is likely to increase deliberate sins—at least, in the case of the less well disposed. If you remove their ignorance, you only substitute bad faith for good without checking sin; or, to speak more technically, you turn *material* sins into *formal* ones, which really offend God and soil the conscience.

Is knowledge dangerous?

Now, there is much to be said for this view, if kept within proper limits. But—as it appears to the writer—it only proves the undoubted need of prudence in giving fuller knowledge of right and wrong to a promiscuous public, since one section or another—one or other individual—may take harm from certain points, either through applying them to their own case unintelligently, or because they are of an age when such fuller knowledge is premature. But, with this proviso of due discretion, the argument from abuse which underlies the objection appears to prove too much. It would equally tell in favour of excluding people from those elementary arts, the ‘Three R’s.’ For these may be—and, unfortunately, are very largely—

turned to evil uses in bad reading, mischievous writing, and those numberless frauds in commerce achieved by skilful juggling with figures. These are capable of abuse (as what is not—Christ's Holy Sacraments included ?). The truest policy would seem to be this: Certainly take every possible precaution against misunderstanding, but *give to men God's simple truth, and trust to its inherent virtue and to Divine grace for the happy result.*

If here and there more complete acquaintance with the details of Christian duty should have the unfortunate effect of putting a conscience in bad faith without hindering evil, in other cases knowledge will diminish sin by rectifying a false conscience. At the worst, the thing appears to be as long as it is broad. But at the best—which we anticipate the rather—fuller truth about most points of duty will effect far more good than harm, because it is God's truth. When wise and prudent writers seem to augur no danger to Faith from tracing for the faithful the outlines of Catholic dogma—in which matter spiritual injury, if caused, would be of a more serious and radical kind—there appears no valid reason for denying the layman a fuller insight into Catholic moral teaching, lest his morals should suffer.

PART I.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

No. I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE COMMANDMENTS.

'If you love Me, keep My Commandments' (St. John xiv. 15).

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the subject which it will be my privilege to discuss with you in this and succeeding Letters. For it deals with the principal laws given by God to men, whereby to shape their moral conduct in the varied circumstances of life. We have, it is true, to believe the truths proposed for our acceptance by Divine authority; but Faith, though necessary for salvation—an indispensable condition for pleasing God¹—is not sufficient. It is not enough to conform our minds to the truth. It behoves us also to square our wills, and the actions following from the choices and decisions of those wills, with the Will of God. In a word, besides believing and hoping in Him, we must also *love* Him—‘He that loveth not abideth in death.’² And what true and solid love of God means our Lord Himself tells us in the words placed at the head of this Letter: ‘If you love

Import-
ance of
Com-
mand-
ments

¹ Heb. iii. 6.

² 1 St. John.

True love of God. Me, *keep My Commandments.*' Here is the test of real love. What, then, can be more important than to have as thorough a knowledge as possible of these Commandments, since without knowing about them we cannot well keep them, nor give solid proof of our love for God.

Com-
mand-
ments
bind
under sin. These Divine enactments are called Commandments. They are not mere expressions of God's good pleasure, of His wishes and preferences. They contain His express orders, binding the consciences of men under pain of sin. At first sight it might seem impossible—considering man's littleness and utter dependence upon his Creator and Lord—that God should ever deign to express His Will in any other form than that of a strict command, or that disregard of His wishes should ever fall short of a manifest sin. Moreover, once we realize (as far as our feebleness allows) His transcendent greatness and awful majesty, it would seem that any, even the smallest, departure from His good pleasure must be, not merely a sin, but a grievous one to boot, entailing the severest form of punishment. But magnanimity forms a part of His very greatness; and so it happens that He wills some things without commanding under sin of any kind, while in those matters which He strictly enjoins He graciously discriminates between graver and venial violations of his law, treating the latter more indulgently, and neither withdrawing nor even diminish-

ing His previous measure of love on their account.¹

The revealed moral code of the Ten Commandments, otherwise termed the 'Decalogue,' is a development, and in some points an extension, of the 'natural' law—that is, those principles of right and wrong which the fully developed and uncorrupted mind of man can perceive by the light of pure reason. In these Commandments God reveals His Will concerning man's moral conduct in fuller detail, and in points which human reason, left to itself, either could not ascertain at all, or else could only perceive dimly.

Moreover, even the Ten Commandments, considered in this Letter, enjoin a lower standard of conduct than the Christian one. Christ our Lord tells us that He 'came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil' or perfect them. Hence a Christian needs to have the Commandments explained to him in their full development by that Church which Christ commissioned to 'teach all nations,' and which, after being reminded by the Spirit of Truth of whatsoever Christ had said, was to teach the world to observe whatsoever He had commanded.² Of this additional perfection introduced by the Gospel, we have an instance in the Fifth and Sixth Commandments—'You have

They develop natural law.

Church supplies their Christian interpretation.

¹ This last statement follows logically from the principle universally held by theologians that no number of venial sins can amount to a mortal sin, with its consequence of the total loss of God's love.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 20 ; St. John xiv. 26.

heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill. . . . But I say to you whoever shall be *angry* with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.' Hence the Catholic Church includes anger and revenge under the sins against the Fifth Commandment. Again: 'You have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.'¹ So the Church extends the prohibition of sensuality to the inner realm of thought and desire, carrying out the purpose of the Gospel teaching, which is to regulate and sanctify the inmost heart of man as well as the use of his bodily senses and his outward conduct. Thus she seeks to reduce all his powers and faculties into harmony with the supreme rule of conduct—the Wisdom and Goodness of God as manifested in Christ.

Classifica-
tion.

On reading through the ten precepts of the Decalogue, we see that they deal with man in his threefold relation—(1) to God; (2) to his neighbour; and (3) to himself. Thus the first three Commandments prescribe our more *immediate* duties towards *God*—the duty of worshipping Him, of reverencing His name, and keeping our promises to Him, and of setting aside one day in the week for His special service. The remaining seven mainly concern man's duties *to his fellow-men*, according to the various relations in which he may stand towards them. But incidentally this

¹ St. Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28.

second group includes also man's duties *towards himself*. Thus, for instance, the Fifth Commandment forbids suicide and self-injury, and the Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth Commandments put restraint upon those irregular appetites which do not directly affect our neighbour. We can also divide the whole range of the Commandments into *commands* and *forbiddances* regulating man's thoughts, desires, words, deeds, and omissions.

This general view of the scope and constitution of the Decalogue will prepare us for a detailed examination of its precepts.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

No. II.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

'I am the Lord thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.

'Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.'

THE opening passage of the Decalogue just quoted contains two parts: (1) It asserts the claim of Almighty God to the worship of His creatures as being their Lord and God. (2) It forbids the worship of false gods—the substitution of any creature in His place—and condemns the worship of inanimate objects, whether natural or made by the skill of man, such as was and is still practised by heathens.

Protestant
v. Catholic
division
and
numera-
tion.

We will begin by noticing the difference between the Protestant and the Catholic way of dividing and numbering the Ten Commandments. As most of you will be aware, the Protestant makes *two* Commandments out of the portion of the Decalogue now before us; and thus the Protestant numeration goes one ahead of the Catholic—his Second Commandment being our First, his

Third our Second, and so on. This difference arises from Protestants treating the opening sentence, 'I am the Lord thy God . . . house of bondage,' as a separate Commandment by itself, whereas we regard it simply as a preliminary declaration by which God reminds the Jews of His Divine right over them and of their own indebtedness to Him.

The Protestant plan would result in eleven instead of ten precepts, except that it combines our Ninth and Tenth Commandments in one, so that both systems result in the same number of precepts.

The Catholic system, however, would seem to be the more logical one. For the sentence, 'I am the Lord thy God,' etc., presents the form of an introductory statement of fact, and not of a command. Yet it must be granted that this statement of God's supremacy over men virtually contains a *positive* command that they should acknowledge the same by worshipping Him; while the sentence, 'Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me,' etc., supplies the *negative* or *forbidding portion* of the precept. Or to put it in another way, the Commandment put down in our Catechism as the First, 'Thou shalt not have strange gods,' etc., when viewed in the light of the previous declaration, 'I am the Lord thy God,' etc., implies a *command* to worship the True God, besides plainly expressing a *prohibition* against false worship.

WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD.

Worship
of God.

The performance of our duties of worship belongs to the virtue of *religion*, as it is called; but the latter, as we shall see under the Second Commandment, extends further than to the mere fulfilment of *strict obligation*. For men may practise religion voluntarily by taking upon themselves fresh religious duties—*e.g.*, by freely taking *vows*, in order to serve God with greater perfection than He exacts generally from all. But at present we have only to do with the essential duties of worship as demanded under pain of sin by the present Commandment.

Human
worship.

The chief *forms* which worship takes are three in number: Faith, Hope, and Charity. These are the primary ways in which we are required to worship God as the Creator and Supreme Ruler of all things. Yet, in as far as these remain only *interior qualities of the soul*, or, when in operation, issue only in *mental* acts towards God, they do not cover the whole ground of worship. For, since we are men, we are called upon to worship as such. The character of worship must be *human*, and agree with the nature of the worshipper, so that the *whole* man may be enlisted in the work of self-dedication to the Lord God. Now, man's nature is not wholly spiritual and invisible. He is partly *material* and *visible*—he has a visible, tangible body, as well as an invisible, intangible soul. Human worship, then, cannot confine itself to inward dispositions and acts of mind and heart.

but further needs to show itself *in outward action* perceptible to the senses. But for this *external* worship only a *part* of man would be devoted to the adoration of Him Who is the Creator of the *whole*.

Those, therefore, who either shun or despise all outward forms and rites of worship and devotion are just as one-sided in their conception of the religious cult due from human beings to their Maker as are those who, on the contrary, look only to the external observances of religion and neglect the worship of the heart. Advocates of a *purely* spiritual and inward worship fall into two distinct errors: (1) They determine the character of worship *exclusively* according to the nature of the Divine Object of their worship, and without regard to that of the worshipper, whereas both should be kept in view. (2) But even granting their principle, they overlook the root-mystery of Christianity—the Incarnation—which, by presenting to us the God-Man as the *distinctive object* of Christian worship, supplies us with a fresh reason for exterior worship as well as for interior.

Had we been amongst the number of those who approached Our Lord during His sojourn on earth, with full belief in Him, should we not have deemed it insufficient to adore Him merely in our hearts, without also expressing our worship outwardly in words and external acts of reverence?

A practical application here suggests itself. There are some who make almost a boast of their disregard for *external religious practices*. Putting those aside whose undemonstrative nature or

Applica-
tions:
I. Con-
tempt of
externals.

natural shyness causes them to shrink from outward demonstration of their feelings—especially of more sacred ones—the class referred to might do well to consider seriously whether their advocacy of purely interior piety be wholly sincere, and not partly an excuse for lack of fervour, dislike of trouble, human respect, or love of singularity. But to turn to the other side of the question.

2. Dis-
regard of
internal
disposi-
tions.

We welcome the truly Catholic spirit which reveals itself in a deep *love for the rites and ceremonies of the Church*—for serving at the altar, taking part in Church functions, processions, and the like. But all this is not of itself the whole—not even the most essential element—of Divine worship. It is but the shell, and needs the kernel; it is but the material body of worship, which will be little better than a lifeless corpse unless quickened and made acceptable to God by infusing into it the *soul* of worship—inward reverence, adoration, and the service of the heart in holiness of life and conduct. It would be an offence against the religious fitness of things that people who are constantly seen taking an active part in the holiest rites of the Church should be otherwise known as defaulters in the matter of Easter duties, or as sources of scandal through their irregular lives. But the moral to be drawn is *not* that such people should cease to indulge their laudable zest for religious ceremonies. That might take them beyond the reach of sorely needed graces which the mercy of God designs to give them through their attendance. Rather let them

remain within the sphere of holy influences, and utilize the good inspirations, which nearness to the altar is likely to bring to them, for the amendment of their lives. So, perchance, the jarring discord between Church appearances and outside conduct will be harmoniously resolved.

The argument against external worship sometimes drawn by non-Catholics from Our Lord's words to the Samaritan woman—'. . . *The true adorers shall adore in spirit and in truth*;' and again: *God is a spirit, and they that adore Him must adore in spirit and in truth*—rests upon an evident misconception of the real drift of Christ's teaching in that place.¹ He is not there urging the merits of interior worship as against exterior, but of the more perfect Christian worship—which He foretells—as against the Jewish. Christ said He 'did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them.' Thus, the external worship of the Mosaic law was not about to be superseded *on account of* its external element; indeed, the Levitic ritual, with all its minute ceremonial details, was ordered by God Himself. Nevertheless, it was imperfect, as all types are compared to their realities, and was to be improved upon by the future Christian worship both in its outward forms and inward spirit. It may be added that, even were Christ insisting upon spiritual worship in the sense of the objection we are considering, it should

Christ did not condemn exterior forms.

¹ St. John iv. 20-24.

be noticed that He does not say, 'shall adore in spirit *only*, and *therefore* in truth.' At most He would be urging the necessity of an interior element in worship, which Catholics also postulate.

Religion
a duty.

We need to realize that the *practice of religion* is in no sense a matter of *taste* or personal *inclination*, to be pursued as a sort of 'hobby' by such as have the time and fancy. It is simply the *first duty* of every rational being. Just as it is a child's first duty to acknowledge its indebtedness to its parents, so it behoves man to acknowledge his complete dependence of soul and body upon the Creator of both. Nor does this obligation bind those alone who have been supernaturally enlightened by the Christian Revelation. The unevangelized pagan is capable of knowing God by the light of reason, and of apprehending the obligation of worshipping Him. Otherwise St. Paul could never have condemned pagans as 'inexcusable,' for that, 'when they knew God' from the contemplation of 'the things that are made,' 'they have not glorified Him as God or given thanks.'¹ Thus, religion is a duty *naturally implanted* in the human soul: then Revelation comes to throw more light upon it and to bring about its more perfect fulfilment. Atheism, therefore, with its denial of God, is unnatural and inhuman, though perhaps not as logically inconsistent as the *practical* atheism of those who profess

¹ Rom. i. 20, 21.

belief in God, and yet practise no religion whatever, even in the secrecy of their hearts. There is reason, also, to fear that such are to be found in far greater numbers among Christian nations than, for example, among Mahometans.

Supernatural religion, or religion enlightened and amplified by Revelation—inasmuch as it means ^{Purpose of life} the worship and service of man's Almighty Creator—constitutes the *one great purpose of human life* in this world, and the sole means of securing Heaven in the next. Consequently all excuses for neglecting the obligations it teaches us—such as worldly preoccupation, business, disinclination, and the rest—are worse than futile. A man who, with every appearance of conviction, will tell you that he has really no time or no liking for attending to God's service must be, to put it at the lowest, as sadly deficient in all sense of humour as a 'traveller' for some business firm who, when questioned on his return by his employers as to business done, should reply: 'Oh! about *that*, the fact is I had so many friends to visit, so many dinners and theatres to attend, that really I had no time for business; and then, don't you know, all that sort of thing unfits a man for serious work.' Temporal needs, calls of business, domestic afflictions, necessary relaxation, and other causes, may limit, and at times justly limit, regularity in church attendance. the length and number of devotions, the use of Sacraments; but they can never *supersede* the essential demands of religion

or justify its neglect. For this would mean that the claims of the creature may take precedence of the rights of God—a virtual denial of Him.¹

¹ For fuller development of this point, see English *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, July, 1903, p. 254.

No. III.

FAITH AND ITS DUTIES.

FAITH is the first of these three virtues, which are called 'theological' virtues, because they are practised directly towards God, and not directly towards others at God's command or for His sake. In this they differ from other virtues. Take that of *justice*. This virtue in its more ordinary and restricted sense regulates our dealings with our neighbour towards whom it is immediately exercised, although it be so exercised with reference to the Will of God. Whereas, in the theological virtues we believe in God, we hope in God, we love God. God, then, is the *immediate* object upon which they are practised.

Faith consists in accepting as infallibly and unchangeably true whatever is proposed to our belief on God's authority, because He is Truth and Truthfulness Itself. It is the submission of the limited mind of the creature to the supreme authority of the Creator. It is the simple and implicit belief of the child in whatever its Heavenly Father tells it. To put it in a nutshell, the true believer 'takes God's word for it.' Moreover, true faith is quite indifferent as to the particular *channel* by which the knowledge of God's truth is conveyed. It cares not whether God speaks

Nature of
theo-
logical
virtues.

What is
meant by
faith?

directly or by the mouth of His appointed representative.

The rule
of faith.

Hence faith consists equally in accepting *the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church* precisely as if that teaching had been heard issuing from the very mouth of God. The only difference is that, where truths are communicated through the medium of a messenger, a man has a right—nay, a duty—to be well assured, as all Catholics are, that the envoy comes to him *duly accredited* by the God of truth. The mere assertion or assumption of authority on the part of the envoy himself does not suffice. He must be able to give *an intelligible account* of the complete process by which the authority of Christ has come to be delegated to him *personally*.

Conviction neces-
sary for
faith.

Thus, a Protestant need not, and *ought* not to, submit his mind to Catholic teaching unless he has found convincing evidence that the Catholic Church, which claims his acceptance, is the one appointed by Christ to teach all nations, and by Him guaranteed from doctrinal error. But he would be equally ill-advised in yielding the guidance of his soul to the first-comer in clerical garb who is ready to take it, or to anyone who elects to mount a platform in Hyde Park on Sundays, and with Bible in hand undertakes to show him the way of salvation. It may be that the listener knows no more about the man instructing him than that he speaks fluently and is paid to do it.

We must not confuse true faith—for which a

gift of God is needed—with that *purely natural* <sup>'Agree-
ing' with</sup> *process* by which a person, after attentive study, comes to adopt certain Catholic doctrines as ^{Catholic} reasonable and true. There is not a little unreal ^{teaching} faith of this sort to be found amongst people who <sup>not neces-
sarily</sup> are neither Catholics nor—humanly speaking—likely to become such. People of this kind may be heard saying to Catholics: 'Oh, I *like* some of your doctrines. I think them so very beautiful. I quite agree with them. They're just what I've always thought,' etc. Two features in this frame of mind deprive it of the character of real faith. (1) Doctrines are accepted *because* they recommend themselves to the mind, and not because there is any sense of a *duty* to accept them *as resting on God's authority*. There is no worship of God here, for there is no notion of submission—of *knocking under* to the 'law of faith'¹—only acquiescence in the satisfactory result of intellectual effort so far obtained. (2) There is no *finality* or *durability* about belief of this nature. As it is only the fruit of natural reasoning, then, just as study and thought have led to its adoption, so more study and more thought may presently lead to its abandonment in favour of some fresh belief. In this way the spiritual life of many a non-Catholic becomes a series of varying doctrinal phases only to be closed by death. Whereas doctrines accepted as resting upon Divine Truth and Truthfulness are by their very nature *final* and incapable of revision.

¹ Rom. iii. 27.

DUTIES OF FAITH.

The duty which faith imposes has its *positive* and its *negative* aspect. We are *commanded* to believe firmly whatever God has revealed or His Church proposes to us in His name, and then we are *forbidden*, under pain of grievous sin, to call such truths in question or to *wilfully entertain doubts* concerning them.¹

How far
exercise of
faith is
binding.

But are there any times or occasions calling for express *acts* of faith on our part?

(a) *Duty of Interior Faith.*

In normal circumstances all that is certain is that *one* act of faith in a lifetime is *not* enough. For some adept at whittling down taught that it was, and the Holy See expressly condemned the doctrine. So it seems to follow that occasional acts of faith are obligatory. But, clearly, he would be a somewhat rare specimen of a Catholic who managed to escape making a good many acts, not merely in a lifetime, but in a year of it. Even a lax one will frequently perform actions involving an act of faith: *e.g.*, when he resists a temptation, or practises a virtue from religious motives—not to mention attendance at Mass, use of Sacra-

¹ Mere puzzling over a truth is not a wilful doubt—*e.g.*, wondering how Our Lord's real Body can be in the Blessed Sacrament. I may well wonder! It is an inscrutable mystery of Divine Wisdom, Power, and Love. But it is good to check such fruitless musings with an act of faith in the spirit of those words: 'I do believe, Lord: help Thou my unbelief' (St. Mark ix. 23).

ments, and many other things. Nevertheless, the frequent use of acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity is a very solid form of piety, and much to be recommended.

In exceptional cases, however, interior acts of faith may be necessary—say, when they are the *only* means by which an individual finds himself able to resist grievous temptations against *other* virtues. When the temptation is *against faith itself*, an act of faith may be good spiritual tactics in some cases; but it is often better to substitute in place of this ‘frontal attack’ a ‘flanking movement’—that is, to circumvent the faith trouble by turning one’s thoughts to something else, however secular. We shall have another opportunity of referring to this spiritual manœuvre against the assaults of Satan. If on any occasion it should be a duty to make an outward declaration of faith, an interior act of the same must accompany it. Again, after apostasy, or a fall into heresy, an act of faith is obligatory. There is no duty to use any set form in making acts of faith—unless a particular one be specially prescribed, as, for instance, on a person’s reception in adult age into the Church.

Explicit Faith (i.e., Faith with a Detailed Knowledge of the Truths believed).—Given that we must believe whatever God has revealed, how far is a Catholic bound to have full knowledge of particular truths? For it is evident that the knowledge of individual doctrines possessed by a theological professor must far exceed that of the

illiterate and uninstructed, who nevertheless may possibly have far stronger and child-like *implicit* faith in all that the Church teaches. Then, again, special light may be given to the unlearned for apprehending the mysteries of faith, according to those words of Christ: 'I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.'¹

We are told that 'without faith it is impossible to please God.'² Hence faith is necessary for gaining Heaven. We are told further that, in order to come to God, a man must believe 'that He is, and is the rewarder to them that seek Him.'³ Faith in the existence of God and in the truth that He rewards the good is a condition for salvation. Further, it is *probable* that express belief in the Trinity and that the Divine Son became man is likewise indispensable, and, consequently, the opposite is also probable as a matter of *speculation*. But *in practice* no one is allowed to dispense himself from knowledge of these two doctrines on the chance of its not being necessary. For when we have to deal with indispensable conditions for saving our souls it is unlawful to adopt any but the *safer* course. So instruction on the two above-mentioned doctrines is obligatory.

The duty, however, of being instructed in the details of our faith does not end here. As a matter of *precept* all must have some knowledge, however crude and superficial, of the following:

¹ St. Matt. xi. 25.

² Heb. xi. 6.

³ *Ibid.*

(1) The Apostles' Creed: *i.e.*, of its doctrines, not necessarily of historical facts mentioned incidentally—*e.g.*, that Pontius Pilate was the particular judge under whom Our Lord suffered. (2) The Ten Commandments. Without some knowledge of these a Christian could not rightly shape his moral conduct. (3) The Sacraments: at least the two necessary for all generally—*i.e.*, Baptism and Penance. Instruction on the remaining five may stand over until the time for receiving them approaches. There is a lighter duty—for those who are capable—to learn the above *by heart*, lest these leading doctrines be gradually forgotten. For this reason children, or others receiving first instruction—especially if uneducated—are made to learn the exact words of the Catechism. Parents who are forced by circumstances to send their children to schools where no Catholic instruction is given, are specially bound to see that they are taught their Catechism thoroughly by some other means. The *degree* of knowledge absolutely required of them is such as will enable them to answer with substantial correctness when properly questioned.

(b) *Duty of Outward Profession of Faith.*

The *positive* and *negative* sides of this duty are so closely allied that they may conveniently be taken together.

We are forbidden under pain of grievous sin ever to *deny* our faith, either *expressly*, or *virtually* and *equivalently* by our conduct so as

Denial of
the faith.

to give a *reasonable* impression to others that we are denying it. Circumstances can be imagined in which simple *silence* would amount to a real denial; say, that in order to secure some benefit or advancement from those who, from bigotry, would not knowingly give it to a Catholic, I stand by while another volunteers the assurance that I am not a Catholic. Great dishonour is done to Christ, 'the author of our faith,' by being ashamed of it. 'He who is ashamed of Me before men, I will be ashamed of him before My Father who is in Heaven.'¹

Inward
faith can-
not excuse
outward
denial.

Inward faith cannot excuse outward denial. It is no excuse to plead, 'I really don't deny my faith in my heart.' If this plea could avail, the martyrs might all have escaped cruel torments and death.

The end
does not
justify the
means.

The Church has never allowed to her children *outward* conformity to false religions for any cause whatever. We have an instance of this in connection with our last Stuart Sovereign. Convinced of the truth of Catholicism, James II., while still Duke of York, consulted the Jesuit Provincial, Father Lobb, as to whether he could be made a Catholic on the condition of still continuing to act publicly as an Anglican for certain reasons; and undoubtedly there were grave ones. But the Jesuit told him that such a thing could not be tolerated—that the Pope himself had no power to grant a dispensation to such an effect, it being a fixed principle of the Catholic religion that *evil must not be done that good may follow*.

¹ St. Matt. x. 33.

James therefore referred this point to Rome, but only to receive a confirmation of the Jesuit's verdict.¹

No cause can justify a Catholic in actively *sharing in non-Catholic acts of public worship*, nor in doing anything that—in the actual circumstances—has truly the appearance of adhesion to non-Catholic beliefs, no matter how loyal to the faith he may be in his own heart. Indeed, mere honesty should deter any person of high principle from such pretences. At the same time, the mere fact of not undeceiving people who fancy us non-Catholics does *not* constitute a denial of our faith. We have no duty to be constantly advertising our Catholicity on every possible occasion. The question, therefore, now arises as to the *positive* part of our duty to make outward profession of it.

Such profession must be made sometimes. For, besides our *private* lives as individual Catholics, there is our *social* and public religious life as members of that visible external corporation, the Church of Christ. Of this we are required to give some signs by joining our fellow-members in open acknowledgment of our common faith. In the case of some secular society we should deem a

Sharing
in non-
Catholic
worship
sinful.

External
profession
of mem-
bership
with
Church.

¹ See quotation from James' 'Memoirs,' in 'Adventures of James II.,' by the author of 'The Prig,' vol. i., p. 441. Hence we can judge what value need be attached to ultra-Protestant contentions that some strongly Ritualistic clergymen are probably 'Romish' priests, and still more probably Jesuits in disguise, who have obtained a dispensation from the Pope to function outwardly as Anglican ministers for secretly 'Romanizing' the Established Church!

man a member only in name who never exhibited his connection with it before his associates.

Meaning
of being
'out of the
Church.'

Thus, we are wont to speak of a Catholic who neglects his Easter duties as being 'out of his Church,' which does not mean that he has really denied his faith, or that he has been actually separated from Catholic communion, but that he has failed to give this required sign of union with the moral body of Christ—his Church. Of course, anyone who practises his religion at all, who attends Mass—albeit irregularly—or goes to the Sacraments, frequently satisfies his duty of outward profession.

Causes for
conceal-
ing one's
faith.

There are at times grave causes which justify, not, of course, a *denial* of faith, but *concealment* of it from others who are in ignorance; in other words, without *positively disowning* our faith—whether expressly or equivalently—we may be allowed to let others go on thinking us non-Catholics, and even studiously avoid giving them any clue to our faith. Such may be the case with solitary converts in Protestant families who would have much to suffer were it known that they had joined the 'Romish Church.'¹ We have in the lives of canonized martyrs of the Church innumerable instances of such perfectly lawful dissembling. In fact, in spite of the firmness of their faith, these brave champions of Christ seemed to have thought

¹ Whether, *as a rule*, this secrecy be advisable or not is very questionable. It may be better to have 'murder out,' and so remove a constantly false position, with its moral strain and dangers.

it unlawful presumption to expose themselves unnecessarily to the danger of apostasy under most terrible torments by the neglect of any precaution for keeping their faith hidden. And yet when things came to such a pass that they must either acknowledge their faith or else be fairly considered to have denied it, why, *then* they regarded detection as God's Will, not the result of their own indiscretion, and therefore rightly felt they might safely count upon those very special Divine graces needed for enduring prolonged torture and keeping faithful unto death. So those who are not quite the stuff of which martyrs are made have need at times to be prudent, lest they draw upon themselves an amount of persecution beyond their powers of endurance.

Here is a case that may sometimes occur. John Example, Dash, aged eighteen, living with his red-hot Protestant parents and family, is *not known* to be a convert to the Catholic Faith. Friday comes. He is physically quite able to abstain, but if he refuse meat his conversion will be known, and, as he has reason to think, will bring upon him very harsh treatment from those whom he loves. Is he bound to abstain under these circumstances? No, strictly speaking, he is not. For the eating of meat on a day of abstinence is by no means a denial of faith *in itself* (or there would be a very large number of renegades amongst us!), and, as John is *not known* to be a Catholic, it cannot bear any such appearance in the eyes of his non-Catholic relatives. But what about the law of

abstinence, which binds under mortal sin? Abstinence is a positive law of observance established by the Church, and does not oblige in the face of a *really grave inconvenience*; and if a person be exempt from observing it in order to avoid serious *physical* suffering, still more may severe—perhaps most acute—suffering of mind, from gross unkindness of parents and relatives, be held a valid cause for exemption.

But what if John be *known* to his exasperated kindred as a ‘pervert to Rome,’ and meat be practically forced upon him, perhaps under serious threats? Even so he may eat the meat, *provided* he in some way cause it to be understood that his doing so is not to be taken as a return to Protestantism, but a mere yielding to violence or deference to parental commands. But if this be true, why could not the holy martyr-child Agnes have dropped a few grains of incense upon the coals before the pagan idol, and so have saved herself from a cruel death, and—by disavowing any pagan *intent* in so doing—also from apostasy? The cases are entirely different. Here the action pressed upon Agnes was universally viewed as an *act of worship*, and, in the circumstances, of *idolatrous* worship, which is *never* lawful. The eating of meat on Fridays is, of itself, neither.

No. IV.

DUTIES OF FAITH IN RELATION TO NON-CATHOLICS.

WE come now to a subject of great practical moment for those who, like ourselves, are living as a small minority in the midst of non-Catholics professing Christianity. It is one, too, that presents many difficult problems of conscience. These vary so much, according to difference of circumstances, that to deal comprehensively with them would be impossible within prescribed limits.

Before proceeding to details, something must be said about the *religious position* of Catholics generally, and the bearing of the same upon their conduct towards other forms of Christian belief.

The position in which our Catholic faith places us is this: We believe that this faith, and it *alone*, is the *one true faith* of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and that the Catholic Church in communion with the See of Rome is His *One True Catholic Church*, and supplies us with *the only genuine form* of Christian *worship*. That is our position, or it is nothing. It is the same one that St. Paul adopted when he said to the Galatians: 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema.'¹

Our religious position.

Catholic faith and worship alone true

¹ Gal. i. 8.

Now, this religious attitude does not present itself to a Catholic's mind as a *philosophical theory*—as a *view, opinion, or persuasion*—such as might be expected to yield under pressure of counter-argument, of feeling for others, or of inconvenience. To the Catholic it is a *first principle*—an absolute and unchangeable *law* of God's own making, which is superior to him, and carries with it certain very definite duties, any shuffling about which would be not merely unprincipled, but a shamefaced denial of Christ before men.

This is our position. Now for its *consequences*.

The evil of religious 'liberalism.'

Our faith is our own in the sense that God has mercifully imparted the gift, and that we are bound to accept and profess it; but it is *not* ours to do what we like with, or adapt to our own convenience or that of others. That is a 'liberalism' which makes free with what does not belong to it.

Such a position logically demands as a *matter of conscience*, and at the painful risk of appearing obstinate and uncharitable, that we should treat any opposing faith or religious system as *undoubtedly false in itself*, however sincerely maintained by its adherents, and that we should consider any practical conduct that directly favoured other *religions*—as distinct from *persons* professing them—*morally sinful*.

The sincerity of non-Catholics not to the point.

The sincerity of others *in what we know to be error* does not alter our conscientious duty to act according to what we know to be certainly true, nor can such good faith in our fellow-countrymen

afford us any sort of excuse for compromising Catholic principle by actions at variance with it. We cannot please men at the expense of our submission to God.

Just in proportion as people differing from us may be the sincerest of the sincere, we are ourselves reminded of *our* obligation to be equally so. True, it may be pleaded that non-Catholics are on their part just as much convinced that *theirs* is the only true religion, and that ours is *undoubtedly false*, though sincerely professed. But this—if strictly accurate—can have no lawful influence upon the firmness of our adhesion to our own principles, together with their practical consequences.

These last will often place us in unpleasant fixes. Where the shoe commonly pinches is in our inability to join hands of good-fellowship with non-Catholics in certain actions of a religious complexion, permissible to us in their eyes, but which we know to conflict with Catholic duty. It pinches most severely of all when non-Catholics volunteer to do us some kindly service favourable to our religious interests, such as we cannot in conscience return in favour of theirs.

For here we seem open to a kind of charge particularly odious in English eyes, that of *unfairness*—of unwillingness to give where we have received. An Anglican, let us suppose, volunteers a handsome donation towards St. Joseph's Missionary College, Mill Hill, and a Catholic finds himself unable to return the compliment in favour of a

Catholics
are un-
fair.'

new Anglican mission in the East End of London.

‘How unfair!’ it will be said. Yet, in truth, there is no question of fairness in the case, since fairness supposes equality—and there is none. We presuppose both parties to be conscientious according to their lights. The Anglican in our example sees no religious objection to aiding and abetting the propagation of a faith opposed to his own, and, being a conscientious person, we must take it that his religion puts no veto upon such generosity. *But ours does.* For this reason it may be well not to *press* non-Catholics to favour us when we are religiously unable to return the compliment in kind—say in the matter of subscriptions to a new high-altar, management of church bazaars, and the like.

Are Pro-
testants
equally
convinced
of their
religion?

It is quite intelligible that there should not exist any conscientious difficulty on the Protestant’s side. For, given the latitude of private judgment on which all forms of Protestantism, whether ‘low’ or ‘high,’ are based, religion must be largely a matter of personal opinion with its followers—held with tenacity, no doubt, just as men cling to the political views which they have studiously formed—but still not viewed as an absolutely fixed and irrevocable rule of faith above themselves, exacting from them strict conformity in every act of their lives.

Considering the notoriously wide doctrinal divergences subsisting, not only between one non-Catholic denomination and another, but among

individuals, and even ministers, of a given denomination, it is inevitable that non-Catholics should come to view their religious principles as fallible, and hence as an inadequate foundation upon which to base an absolutely fixed line of conduct, binding upon their conscience, and to be pursued at all costs towards those who differ from them.

Hence it seems impossible to admit, as a general proposition, that non-Catholics are on an equal footing with ourselves in the firmness of their convictions.

Be this, however, as it may, the practical point The practical point for Catholics. for a Catholic is that, being bound strictly by the principles of his faith, as by an unerring and Divine *law*, he must carry them out in daily practice, even at a sacrifice, whether the religious beliefs of others sit more lightly upon them or not.

GOING TO NON-CATHOLIC CHURCHES OR CHAPELS.

Mere *entrance* into a place of worship of another religion is neither in itself a religious act, nor equivalent to sanctioning the religion practised there; nor—in England, at least—would it be likely to cause *scandal*. In exceptional cases, of course, it might possibly be dangerous to the individual doing it. But in Catholic countries, or where vigorous attempts are made by Protestant agencies to proselytize poorer Catholics, the case is different. Hence, perhaps, the severer line Entering non-Catholic churches.

adopted in Ireland. In Rome, too, owing to special circumstances, it was deemed necessary by the Cardinal Vicar to issue, in 1878, very strict instructions for the guidance of parish priests, in which presence at Protestant worship, and especially at sermons, even out of *mere curiosity*, as well as some other acts tolerated amongst Catholics in England, was declared to be *grievously* sinful. Such legislation proves, at all events, that the matter in hand is very grave, and cannot be treated like a trifling question of religious propriety or etiquette.

But from this it does not follow that mere presence at heretical worship *without participation* would be a *mortal* sin in non-Catholic countries or localities where the religious condition of things is wholly different, and Catholics and Protestants have long lived intermingled in the unhindered practice of their respective religions. Further, where circumstances eliminate *grievous* guilt, any respectable reason for *mere attendance* will do away with sin altogether.¹

Nevertheless, in the religious state of countries like England and the United States there is need to guard against too great freedom of *religious* contact with non-Catholics, as though 'religious differences,' as they are called, were of trifling

¹ During the days of persecution in England attendance at the 'Reformed' worship was enforced against our Catholic forefathers under severe penalties *as a sign* of conformity to the new religion. Hence they were obliged to resist at any cost. One Catholic gentleman set aside the revenues of a large estate to pay the fines exacted for refusal.

importance. This would be to fall into an odious indifferentism, which seems to have been the main blot in what was censured by Rome some years ago under the title of 'Americanism.' Action which favours the disastrous notion that 'one religion is as good as another' (which it is not—any more than one cook is as good as another) must be carefully avoided by every faithful Catholic.

Joining in non-Catholic worship is never lawful under any circumstances whatever. This is always a grievous sin, though it be only done *outwardly*, say, by answering prayers, or singing hymns, etc., *in company with the congregation*, or by so conducting one's self as to give every appearance of taking part in the ritual. Consequently, it is wrong to kneel, stand, and sit at the appointed times with the rest. Sometimes people defend this on the ground of 'not hurting the religious feelings of the worshippers.'

Respect for the *persons* and the religious *sincerity* of non-Catholics is laudable, but not respect for their erroneous *religious system*—as the Catholic interloper knows it to be. The publicly conducted worship in which he shares is a most *formal* and *official* expression of that system, even though the prayers, etc., actually used be not distinctly heretical in their matter. As the Catholic cannot proclaim the above distinction, his outward conformity in the various movements gone through can have no other appearance than that of inwardly favouring the religion expressed in worship. The

Joining
in non-
Catholic
worship.

Objections con-
sidered.
'Respect
for feel-
ings.'

moral is, not to indulge an idle curiosity in false worship, and to stay away, so as not to be forced to pain others who are worshipping according to their consciences. As a matter of fact, however, there appears no reason why the worshippers should be offended by the passive attitude of a Catholic visitor, since numbers of non-Catholics adopt the same in our own Catholic churches, and no objection is made unless they positively misbehave—as sometimes they do.

'We go to you, but you won't come to us!'

In this connection, the principles we laid down at the start will solve the objection which Protestants are wont to raise: 'We go to *your* churches, but you won't come to ours.' Well, if Protestants desire to attend our services, this may be because they feel the want of something they do not find in their own, and see no wrong in seeking it where they hope to find it. Numbers do this every Sunday in England, and, always supposing that they apprehend no wrong in this, we may thank God that they do, since such visits frequently become the seed of conversion to the true Faith. But Catholics have nothing to gain by returning the compliment, so to say, but only their consciences to soil by partaking in what they know to be, objectively speaking, false worship.

Gover-
nesses,
nurses,
servants,
etc.

Governesses, sick-nurses, servants, etc., are not forbidden to accompany their charges to non-Catholic churches and attend them during service, if this be required of them, or their not doing so would be a serious loss to their charges. This is

a part of their *service*, and not a religious act. But, of course, they must not *join* in the worship themselves. Further, they must remember that *self-preservation* is the first law of the supernatural as well as of the natural life, and hence if their faith be exposed to perversion, or even to injury, by constantly hearing non-Catholic sermons or instructions, their attendance would be sinful. In such a case the advice of an experienced priest as to how they should provide against the danger should be sought for as soon as possible.

Governesses and servants are often required to *attend family prayers* in non-Catholic families. They are not forbidden to do this as a mere matter of domestic discipline, provided they do not join in answering, and they make it clear in other ways that they adhere to their faith and practise its duties as far as they have the opportunity.

Protestant
family
prayers.

Invalids in Protestant homes are often required to attend a sort of service on the premises in the form of morning prayer, as a strict condition of being allowed to remain in the house. They, too, may attend *bodily* provided they make it to be understood in other ways that they do so as a matter of discipline and are true to their Catholic Faith.

Catholics
in Pro-
testant
homes.

Catholic musicians—organists, instrumentalists, vocalists—are not allowed to function in non-Catholic worship. It matters not whether they be paid or whether they ‘give their services,’ though the last is *worse*, inasmuch as they are extending a *gratuitous* favour to false worship.

Musi-
cians.

They are not merely taking direct part in religious worship, but—proportionately to their skill—in a way to enhance the attractiveness, and hence the influence, of a false religion.

But if the occasion be only a *recital* of sacred music in the church *without a religious service*, the case is somewhat different, though it still needs justification. If the object to which the proceeds of the *recital* are destined be *distinctively sectarian*—say, for building a chapel of ease, a new pulpit, and the like—some *serious reason* is needed, such as poverty (if the musician be paid) or the avoidance of some *serious* inconvenience or loss.

Different
forms of
participa-
tion in
heresy.

But, it may be asked, how can any cause justify the doing of what is essentially wrong? Nothing can, certainly. But there is only essential wrong in *direct* and *immediate* co-operation with a false religion, not in *indirect* or *remote*. Thus, *actually* taking part in an act of non-Catholic worship is *direct* co-operation with false belief. On the other hand, contributing in a somewhat undefinable degree by use of one's art to the profits of an entertainment which will be used by *others* beyond our control for promoting an erroneous faith is only *indirect* and *distant* co-operation. But even this is unlawful without an *adequate reason*.

Another example of *indirect* support to heresy is found in the case of a *labourer*, *mason*, or other *artificer*, who takes part in the erection of a Protestant church. Temporal need, the impossibility of picking and choosing between one job offered and another—lest employment

be altogether lost—prove fairly universal justifying causes for workmen. If it were a case of being forced by others to work at the job *out of hatred for the Catholic Faith*, a workman would be bound to refuse at all costs.

The Hospital-Nurse.—She is allowed to send ^{Hospital nurses,} word to a Protestant minister that a patient of his religion wants to see him, or that one of his flock is dying. But she is *not* justified in *explicitly* asking him to come *for the purpose of performing religious rites*, since no one may request another to do what *he* or *she* knows to be a profession of false religion. She may also prepare the table, (though she knows what will be enacted at it)—for this is not the non-Catholic rite itself—but she may on no account assist the minister in the rite itself, by responding to prayers, or by manual services, nor in any way give him to understand that his rites are ‘practically the same thing’ as ours. Here we have further instances of *indirect* co-operation in the exercise of an erroneous faith—such as is only allowable for *grave* reasons. In the case of Catholic hospital-nurses there *are* very grave causes indeed. They may lose their place and seriously damage their career, on which they depend for a livelihood. But, what is *far graver* in God’s sight, by not going to the full length of what has just been stated as lawful, they may make things very hard for *Catholic* patients, and even occasion the loss of their souls by provoking the non-Catholic authorities to obstruct the visitation of Catholic priests and the administra-

tion of the Last Sacraments. People say: 'But is it not better that sick and dying Protestants should seek by the nurse's aid to secure their own religious rites, rather than die like dogs?' As an indication of a desire to turn to God and seek His help in time of need, according to their lights, certainly it is better. But, then, the line of conduct just explained *in no way hinders this*, while it confines the nurse to what is lawful for her as a conscientious Catholic.

Assisting
at bap-
tisms,
marriages,
etc.

Attendance at non-Catholic baptisms, marriages, funerals, etc. We must notice the difference between *civil* or *social*, and *religious* acts—that is to say, between actions performed by a man in the character of a *citizen* or member of society, and those which are exclusively of a *religious* complexion. Thus, being *simply present* at a baptism conferred by a non-Catholic minister, or at a marriage between *two Protestants* in a Protestant church—even in the capacity of *bridesmaid*—may be tolerated, in England at least, since here this is regarded merely as a piece of courtesy or social 'attention' paid to the parties concerned for family reasons, and not at all, under ordinary circumstances, as any sign of worship or of adhesion to any particular form of faith. To attend a 'mixed' marriage which the Catholic party allows to be celebrated *in defiance of Catholic laws* is quite another matter.

Restric-
tions to
above.

But in the case of baptisms a Catholic cannot be godparent or 'sponsor,' either *by proxy*, since this would be answering for the erroneous religious

faith of the godchild, or *in person*, for this would be to take an important part in the religious rite itself. A Catholic parent, *e.g.*, in the case of a mixed marriage may on no account share in arranging for her child's baptism by a non-Catholic minister. Moreover, unless grave trouble would befall her, she must positively oppose it. A Catholic *nurse* or *servant* is not forbidden simply to hold the infant on the occasion as a matter of convenience and part of her domestic service. As regards *marriages*, a Catholic ought not to *sign as a necessary witness*, since this action constitutes a confirmation of the union, which, being *necessarily* a Sacrament of Christ when contracted by a baptized Christian, is unlawfully celebrated by anyone not deputed by the true Church of Christ.¹

In the case of *burials* there is still less difficulty in Catholic attendance amongst us, since here it is perfectly recognised that the ties of relationship, respect for the person and memory of the dead (not for his religious errors), and sympathy with the mourners, form adequate motives for *civil* attendance. *Public officials* of the State or *civil* State or civic functions. *functionaries* may attend functions, although these be mingled with religious services of the non-Catholic State Church—at all events, *when they have not the choice* of going to their own Catholic places of worship. This applies to such solemnities

¹ This does not mean, of course, that the marriage is *invalid* or *void* in the sight of God; but that the minister, though doubtless unaware of the fact, is doing wrong by *usurping* the functions of a Catholic priest.

as Coronations and other State ceremonies, to Aldermen and Councillors, and other officials accompanying a non-Catholic Mayor on his official attendance at church.

Certain precautions to be observed:

In concluding this part of our subject, let me emphasize *certain cautions* although already touched upon.

1. Seek advice.

1. The rule that 'circumstances alter cases' nowhere applies with greater force than in the present matter. Hence, in endeavouring to throw light upon certain cases of more ordinary occurrence and more general application, we have left many others untouched in which the presence or absence of some particular circumstance may make a great difference. The moral is: In any doubt that arises, *refer the case to a priest*, not leaving out the chief thing!

2. Where 'doctors differ.'

2. Complaint is sometimes made that one priest allows what another declares to be unlawful. People are sometimes rather scandalized at this, and are inclined to ask: 'Does this mean that our priests are no more agreed on religious principles than Anglican clergymen?' No, it means nothing of the kind. This occasional divergence in decisions argues not difference in principle, but difference of *judgment* in the application of uniform principles to a particular set of circumstances. There are 'nice points' in theology as well as in law; and where Church authority has not stepped in to decide particular cases, she leaves them to be dealt with by her authorized ministers. These being neither omniscient nor personally infallible,

it is likely they may weigh up some more complicated case differently—and, indeed, such a case may be capable of being skilfully argued either way. This state of things, when it occurs, places the Catholic in no *practical* quandary at all, for as an ordinary layman he is free in conscience to follow either decision. He is not responsible for his spiritual guides, while the latter are responsible to their ecclesiastical superiors, and ultimately to God.

3. As it has been impossible to enter into many concrete examples of what is lawful or unlawful in the relations of Catholics with non-Catholics, it may be useful to set down the *tests* to be applied to any case that arises. *Three* things have to be inquired into:

3. Three tests of lawfulness.

(a) The *nature of the act itself* as affected by the *actual circumstances*. Is the action so considered equivalent to an outward profession of non-Catholic religion? is it a *direct* participation in an act of non-Catholic worship? does it *directly* promote or favour non-Catholic beliefs? If any of these questions demand an affirmative answer, then the action is unlawful under *all* circumstances, and usually a *mortal* sin. Further, even where my action favours some other faith but *distantly*, have I a good reason for my act, and one *proportionate* to the *amount* of favour given by the same? If *not*, I sin, though not always *mortally*.

(a) Nature of one's act.

(b) The question of *scandal*. Given that my action does not stand condemned under any of the heads contained in (a), will it *cause scandal* to

(b) Will scandal result?

others? If so, it will be sinful in proportion to the amount of scandal anticipated.

(c) Will my faith suffer?

(c) Given that my action does not fall under either (a) or (b), there is another vital question to be settled: Will my action *injure* or *pervert my own faith*? If so, the natural *law of self-preservation*—which is obviously more imperative where my soul is concerned than as regards my bodily life—forbids the action. This test is, perhaps, specially necessary for *recent* or *much tempted and tried* converts. Frequent attendance at the Anglican worship of former days—though it be lawful as far as (a) and (b) are concerned—may easily revive old associations, and these, acting upon a troubled mind, or highly impressionable nature, are calculated to unsettle faith and undermine loyalty to the Catholic Church.

4. Charity and tact with Protestants.

4. Since we are often unwillingly forced to disoblige our non-Catholic brethren in matters of religion, it is all the more needful for us to mitigate by charitable speech and dealing the seeming churlishness of our refusals.

Again, tact, ingenuity, and good-natured humour will often extricate us from difficulties. That Reverend Mother of a Catholic convent was certainly humorously ingenious, who, when a neighbouring Anglican Superioress wrote to her, in an emergency, for a small supply of 'wafers,' (destined, of course, for an Anglican 'celebration'), replied expressing her regret at not being able to oblige, and explaining that she was accustomed always to use sealing-wax instead.

No. V.

SINS AGAINST FAITH.

Now we will consider some *prohibitions* contained under the First Commandment, and first of all we will review the various forms of *sin against faith*. Sins
against
faith.

There are three principal ways in which the faith may be violated—(1) Infidelity or disbelief; (2) heresy; (3) apostasy.

Disbelief.—Mere ignorance of the true faith is not a sin. This is termed *negative* infidelity. But once a person has prudent reasons for thinking that the Christian faith is the true one, yet for one motive or another shirks further inquiry, he is guilty of infidelity in a partial degree, and, of course, he is guilty of disbelief in the fullest sense if, being *quite* convinced, he withholds his unqualified assent. 1. Disbe-
lief or
infidelity.

Infidelity, then, supposes previous *absence* of the true faith. *Heresy* presupposes its existence and *subsequent rejection*—in spite of the known teaching of the Catholic Church. 2. Heresy.

Hence to call our non-Catholic neighbours generally 'heretics' does not seem to square with the ordinary theological definitions. For they have been born and bred without the faith, inheriting a false religious tradition from their forefathers, which is kept alive by ignorance, bad

logic, prejudice, and largely, no doubt, by culpable misrepresentation.

So, in the case of a born non-Catholic who afterwards perceives Catholic truth, but refuses to submit to it, we have 'positive' *infidelity*, and not *heresy*. No doubt, those who apply the term 'heretics' to non-Catholics in this country view the latter in connection with their ancestors in the sixteenth century, who really *abandoned* the faith. This appears a rather arbitrary way of classifying them. However, a man would, of the two, probably resent less being called a 'heretic' than an 'infidel'—a term associated with the gross paganism of barbarous nations or with rank atheism among civilized races.

3. Apostasy.

Apostasy, again, differs from both the above forms of unfaith. It is different from *infidelity* because—like *heresy*—it supposes previous faith. It differs, too, from *heresy*; for the *apostate* abandons the *whole* of the Christian Faith, while the *heretic* may only reject a *part* of it—*e.g.*, a Catholic who turns Anglican though only denying the one doctrine of Papal Infallibility.

Faith indivisible.

So far for technicalities. As far as the *guilt of the sin* against faith is concerned, there is no appreciable difference between apostasy, heresy, and, for that matter, *wilful* infidelity. This is clear. For whether only one revealed Christian doctrine be denied, or all, the authority of God Who reveals is equally compromised. Thus, faith is an indivisible quantity, and is forfeited as surely by rejecting—say, the Immaculate Con-

ception—as by denying all the articles of the Apostles' Creed. In the Canon Law of the Church the *heretic* and the *apostate* are treated on the same footing—for example, in the matter of excommunication.

Though I am writing to Catholics, it will be useful to examine more closely what exactly constitutes the guilt of wilful *heresy*.

The two chief conditions are these:

Condi-
tions for
heresy.

1. The error must concern a doctrine *contained or revealed in the Scriptures*, and also *proposed as such by the Church to our belief*. But, be it carefully observed, it is not necessary for the guilt of heresy that the doctrine should have been solemnly *defined* by supreme authority; it is quite sufficient that it should form part of the ordinary daily teaching of the Church throughout the world, which is *infallible*. To say, 'It is not heresy to deny this doctrine: for the Church has never *defined* it,' is utterly *unsound*. Hence it would be heresy to deny any truth clearly contained in the Scriptures, because the Church teaches all that the Scriptures do.

As for truths proposed to us by the Church in her office as infallible teacher, but not *as being revealed*, the sin committed against Catholic belief by denying them (for sin there would be) would not be one of heresy—for instance, if a man denied that a *canonized* Saint, *e.g.*, St. Francis of Assisi, was actually in Heaven at the time of canonization.

2. The other element required for heresy is

obstinacy, *pertinacity*; so that a man knowing something to be taught by the Church as part of revelation, for one reason or another, persists in questioning or denying it. The case, however, is quite conceivable where a person out of gross and culpable ignorance *obstinately* holds to a real error, but still has the prevailing intention of submitting his judgment to the authority of the Church. It may be that some pride of intellect or self-interest blinds him to the truth and weds him strongly to his own false opinion, and yet he may not mean to go the length of resisting the authority of the Church. When anyone holds an error unawares, he is said to be in 'material' heresy; or if he knows, but still resists, in 'formal' heresy. The latter is a *very* grave sin indeed; the former is not in itself a sin at all, though the pride or other vice, which sometimes leads to ignorance of the truth, of course is.

What is
schism?

This may be as good a place as any to point out the difference between heresy and what is called *schism*. *Schism* is rebellion against lawfully constituted ecclesiastical authority, a sin of *disobedience* to the Church in its capacity as Ruler; whereas *heresy* resists the Church in its office of infallible Teacher. The term *schism* implies a rending or tearing, and thus the Fathers speak of it as a tearing asunder of Christ's seamless garment, the symbol of that unity of the Church with which Our Lord dowered His Church. Heresy of any wide extension includes schism, but schism does not necessarily include heresy—

unless it proceed to deny *in principle* the right of the Church to command and legislate. But a large schism generally develops later into heresy.

OTHER SINS AGAINST FAITH.

Denying One's Faith.—It is never lawful to Denial of the faith. *positively deny* one's faith. But one is not bound under sin to acknowledge one's faith to every curious inquirer. It is lawful to give such people a polite hint to mind their own business. Still, cases occur in which the question cannot be evaded without an appearance of denial; and then it is wrong not to own up. In times when to be a Catholic meant fine and imprisonment, it was lawful to withhold acknowledgment when questioned, on the principle that no one is bound to incriminate himself, but has a right that his guilt shall be proved by his accusers.

Omitting to inquire into the Faith.—Though this The duty of inquiry. does not personally concern Catholics, it may be useful that they should form a correct judgment as to what is obligatory in this matter. Ill-founded suspicions do not oblige to inquiry, but a serious and prudent doubt does; where such doubt exists, the ignorance is no longer 'invincible.'¹ This has a practical bearing on our dealings with non-Catholics, for whom we laudably desire the grace of conversion. The danger

¹ Ignorance is 'invincible' when its victim has no clue to its presence, and so is hindered from removing it by means of inquiry. Such a one is also said to be 'in good faith.'

of putting people into *bad faith* by enlightening them while as yet they are unprepared to follow the light does not occur so much when serious doubt has already established itself in their minds. Yet even here one must be careful not to press too hard upon really unsettled minds, lest we drive them beyond their pace, and so perhaps *increase* their bad faith. .

Books
against
faith.

Reading Books against Faith.—This is a prolific source of mischief to souls, and far more radically harmful than reading indecent books, unless these also teach immorality *in a dogmatic way*, and so professedly contradict the moral teachings of faith. Writings which offend against Christian purity will generally strike a warning note of shame in any averagely modest mind ; and this is a protection against being surprised into danger. But anti-Catholic or anti-Christian writings, especially if ably penned, appeal to the more intellectual side of our nature, and by flattering it lead us into unsuspected peril. Those especially have most to fear from irreligious reading who, destitute of any systematic training in philosophy or theology, indulge their intellectual curiosity or vanity by making themselves acquainted with all the various religious aberrations of the human mind. The press is being worked just now for all it is worth in order to deliver rationalistic attacks upon Christianity—whether openly or under cover of so-called science—and Catholics have therefore the greater need to guard their faith by care in their choice of reading. It is *not* bravery, but

rashness of the most foolish and dangerous type, to expose one's self unnecessarily to catching the plague of unfaith. It is moral cowardice born of human respect, and *not* courage, to yield to those who taunt us with being 'afraid of considering the other side of the question.' For us Catholics, in the matter of religious belief, there is only one side.¹

Culpable Ignorance of Catholic Doctrine.—As we are bound to practise our faith, and this is impossible unless we know it, we are obliged as a matter of conscience to procure sufficient knowlege of it. Culpable
ignorance
of our
faith.

We have already seen what is the minimum of instruction in Catholic doctrine binding under sin.²

Before closing the present subject, let me say something about the *authority of Roman Congregations*. We have seen that it is a duty of faith to submit to the infallible teaching authority of the Church. But what sort of deference is due from us to precepts concerning *doctrine* which are sometimes issued, not formally by the Sovereign Pontiff himself, but by one or other of the Roman Congregations or ecclesiastical courts charged by the Holy See with watching over the purity of the faith, and whose decrees the Pope *approves*, without, however, exercising therein his *infallible* authority? Authority
of Roman
Congre-
gations.

First, as to *interior submission of mind*. A private individual who refuses to conform his own opinions Assent of
the mind.

¹ I am not here decrying the study of errors (for the purpose of refuting them) *by those properly qualified*—i.e., who, besides possessing the needful training, seek help from God for performing their task without danger to themselves.

² See pp. 26, 27, 'Explicit Faith.'

to such weighty pronouncements by a picked body of experts *sins against the virtue of prudence*. In any other department such conduct would be deemed that of a conceited fool. Of course, it is possible that the decision of the ecclesiastical court may condemn a doctrine which is *already proved* to be incompatible with *revealed truth*, the new pronouncement being only designed to call *fresh attention* to this fact; if so, *faith* as well as *prudence* will be compromised.

On the other hand, as the kind of decree referred to here is not an *infallible* one, it follows that now and again its teaching may possibly turn out to be mistaken—a point, however, which the laity, as not being trained theologians, are incompetent to decide. But if to a man learned in the matter there should appear really weighty reasons against the decision given, then—though he may not, without the fault of rashness, condemn it—he is allowed merely to *suspend* his judgment until the matter has been decided by an infallible decision of the Holy See.

Outward
obedience

Secondly, it is clear from the above that *external obedience* is still more necessary in the way of not teaching nor publicly arguing against the decree in question. For here others may be led astray and scandal caused.

All that has been said about the duties of faith may be summed up in one word, 'Loyalty'—whole-hearted and fearless loyalty to God and His Divine revelation, and loyalty to Christ Our Lord, as represented by the Church of His faithful promises.

No. VI.

HOPE.

By *hope* in God we also fulfil a part of our duty of worshipping Him.

Hope stands midway between the two evil extremes of *excessive* hope—or *presumption*—and *lack* of hope—or *despair* of God's mercy.

We have said before that hope depends upon faith. Hope rests upon our belief in the *power* of God to give us the possession of Himself—our Supreme Good—in Heaven, and all the aids necessary for the purpose; in His *goodness*, which wishes to do this for us; and in His *faithfulness to the promises* which He has made, that He will do it. The power, goodness, and fidelity of God are the causes of our hope in Him.

To guard hope against becoming *presumption*—a less common danger nowadays, perhaps, than that of discouragement and diffidence—it must be remembered that, though it is most *certain* that God will not fail us, our great weakness makes it possible that we may be wanting *to Him*, and hence knowledge of ourselves necessarily tinges our hope with some fear lest we should fail to do what is required on our own part.

Of the *necessity* of hope, and the *precept* of making acts of hope, nothing need be said,

Motives
for hope.

Distrust
of self
hinders
presump-
tion.

because what has been already observed on these heads concerning faith applies equally to hope.

SINS AGAINST HOPE.

Nature of
despair.

I. *Despair*—that is to say, a deliberate abandonment of all hope on the ground that we cannot save our souls, or that God will not give us the grace necessary for conquering our bad habits.

The injury
done to
God.

It is well to look upon this great sin from the side of Almighty God, lest we should mistake despair for abject humility befitting a wretched sinner. The injury it inflicts on the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God is of the *deepest*. It specially outrages the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, Who has so loved sinners as to endure His terrible Passion and Death for their sakes, and pay a price for sin more than sufficient to atone for the iniquities of ten thousand worlds, though these were indefinitely more wicked than our own.

Frighten-
ing text of
Scripture.

We need not discuss the proper explanation of Bible texts which speak of repentance from certain forms of sin as ‘impossible,’ or refer to a sin ‘that shall be forgiven neither in this world nor in the world to come’—what is called the *unforgiven*, that is, the ‘unforgivable,’ sin. For a Catholic—who leaves the interpretation of Holy Writ to the Infallible Church—it is enough to state the uniform and most positive Catholic teaching, which is to this effect: that there is no *kind* of sin that can be consummated in this life

—no *number* of sins, no number of *relapses* into sin—that God will not most certainly forgive *upon our sincere repentance*, for which He is ever ready to grant us the necessary grace if we but earnestly seek it.¹ Despair in its full sense is a *mortal* sin.

There are *minor* defects of hope which do not amount to more than *venial* sin, or which, as being only passing and *involuntary* depressions of mind, are but imperfections. These are only too common with those who are truly striving, in spite of many faults, to serve God and save their souls. They are, however, extremely injurious to the soul and greatly enervate its spiritual life. They do far more permanent injury to it than some other faults, which the desponding person would studiously avoid. In view of death, it is most desirable to acquire in life the habit of blindly trusting in God, no matter *what* betides us, and in spite of all appearances, however black and hopeless. A fervent and intelligent practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus proves an effective remedy to discouragement.

A touching instance of unconquerable hope in spite of everything is afforded us by an incident told of Napoleon's historic retreat from Moscow. At the taking of that city by the French, Jean —, A model of hope.

¹ *Final impenitence*—i.e., refusal to repent till death has come—is of course incapable of pardon because the time for repentance is ended. But, then, this sin cannot be committed while life lasts. So the proverb, 'While there is life there is hope,' applies to salvation as well as other things.

a French drummer-boy, was so severely injured by a cannon-shot that both his legs had to be amputated. While detained in the military hospital at Moscow, he confided to the chaplain that he was constantly assailed by fierce temptations to despair. 'Mon enfant,' replied the *aumônier*, 'whenever the devil thus attacks you, say to the good God, like holy Job: "Even though Thou shouldst kill me, yet will I hope in Thee."' 'But how will you that I remember all that?' objected the illiterate lad. 'Something shorter, now, Monsieur le Curé.' 'Then say instead, "Kill me . . . I hope in Thee,"' suggested the priest. 'Ah, well! Kill me . . . I hope in Thee,' repeated Jean. 'But yes! I can say that, Monsieur le Curé, and I promise to do so.' Then followed the rout of the 'Grande Armée.' The Russians, while expelling the enemy from Moscow, cruelly drove even the wounded soldiers from the hospitals at the point of the bayonet, our drummer-boy among the rest. Flying from the building as fast as his crutches would let him, the crippled lad was violently precipitated down a stone staircase and broke his neck. There at the bottom of the steps lay poor Jean, helpless and dying; and, as a more fortunate comrade afterwards bore witness, Jean's last act was a brave but weak attempt to wave his crutch in the air, as he gasped out with his last breath: 'Kill me . . . I hope in Thee! Kill . . . me . . . I hope . . . in . . . Thee!' Here indeed was hope of a kind that 'shall not be confounded for ever.'

2. *Presumption*—which consists in hoping on false grounds. Presump-
tion.

Thus, it would be presumption for a person to rely on *his own spiritual strength* to perform some extremely difficult act of virtue, or to pass safely through a very powerful temptation of his own seeking which he knows it would require exceptional grace to conquer; or to expect to be saved without fulfilling the necessary conditions for repentance—*e.g.*, if a dying Catholic hopes to obtain the mercy of God for his grievous sins, though he refuses to confess them.

In practice presumption is not usually a mortal sin. Its guilt
not com-
monly
grievous.
Examples

A case in which grievous sin might be more strongly suspected is that of a sinner to whom, at the time of sinning, a thought occurs of the *ease with which pardon may be obtained* afterwards by confession. The only condition under which presumption would be thus committed is if the greatness of God's mercy, or the reflection that God can forgive many sins just as easily as one, formed the real *reason* or *motive* of his sinning—an outrageous state of mind which is probably rare.

The more ordinary case, and there is no presumption in it, would be this: A person, while actually yielding to sin, hopes nevertheless to obtain pardon for his weakness. For example, a man taking an annual holiday, and indulging in many sinful excesses, puts off going to confession until he has had his fling. Entertaining hope of pardon, in as far as it diminishes the fear of

sinning freely, does not constitute the real *motive* of sin. This *motive* is usually nothing more than the gratification of the passions. Nay, the very fact of this hope accompanying the act of sin somewhat detracts from its intensity and malice, since it includes the intention to repent later.

Nor is it contrary to the virtue of hope that a sinner should repeat a sin because, as he tells himself, it is as easy to confess several as one. But all the same, this is a very evil frame of mind, and suggests the necessity of looking carefully to the contrition and purpose of amendment.

Not
caring for
heaven.

It is not a *grievous* sin to wish one could live here below for ever, although the possession of God in heaven forms the supreme object of our hope. For such immortality being impossible, it cannot properly be hoped for. Such a worldly spirit indeed reveals an excessive attachment to the things of earth, and hence may *result* in sin by causing people to pursue worldly aims at the expense of their eternal interests, or those of others depending on them.

Results of
such
worldli-
ness
exem-
plified.

This is what a Catholic girl does who marries Protestant money or position, although she sees no reasonable hope that the Catholic conditions, upon which the needful dispensation for the 'mixed' marriage depends, will be realized after the wedding. A person is equally worldly who, to obtain advancement, puts the practice of his religion in the background—a device, however, which sometimes produces unexpected results. B., a young man in one of our large commercial

centres, was once offered an unusually well-paid opening in a large mercantile house. Before being finally accepted, the blunt, rough-and-ready manager inquired of him, 'And now, Mr. B., tell me: what are you?'—*i.e.*, referring to his religion. B., alarmed by visions of bigoted rejection, hemmed and hawed, and nervously suggested that perhaps his religion did not matter—in which he may have been right. 'Come now,' insisted the 'boss,' 'none of that for me. I always want to know what my men are. Where do you go to church?' B. intimated that sometimes he had been to X. Church, where, in fact, he was a pretty regular attendant. 'Oh, indeed!' said the arbiter of B.'s fate; 'and which of the priests know you there?' B. did not suppose that any of them knew him much. 'What!' cried the manager, 'you a *Catholic*, and not known to your clergy! Now, you just turn out of my house! I don't mind engaging *good* Catholics, but——' I refrain, my readers, from specifying the final destination which the irate manager chose for himself in the event of his engaging 'a *bad* one.'

No. VII.

CHARITY : DUTIES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

CHARITY.

IT might be naturally expected that Letters on Faith and Hope would be followed by some reference to Charity. Reference will now be made, but briefly—because there is not much to be said on this subject in any close connection with the First Commandment.

Charity. The *state of grace*, or freedom from mortal sin, places the soul in a *habitual* state of charity towards God, which will remain until a person falls into mortal sin, and so ceases to give that practical proof of the love of God—substantial observance of His Commandments.

Its perfection. The *perfection* of charity in act, and hence of Christian conduct, consists in doing all our actions from the motive of love of God above all things, and for His sake—the highest motive of which man is capable. But this most perfect disposition is not essential for the worship of God as enjoined by the First Commandment. Then, as for the second precept of charity, which enjoins love of our neighbour for God's sake, most of our duties in this matter are included in the Commandments regulating man's conduct towards his fellows, and will be considered in their proper place. We will now pass on to the duties of religious worship.

I. ADORATION.

Adoration—a Latin word derived from *ad*, to, and *os, oris*, the mouth, and descriptive of an Eastern obeisance or ‘salaam,’ in the course of which the hands are conjointly raised to the lips—is a general term expressing reverence of mind, or of body and mind, paid to some object on account of its excellence. From this it follows that the *quality* of adoration will correspond with the *degree* of excellence. Hence, to God, Who is infinitely excellent, the highest kind of adoration must be accorded, the main end of which is to acknowledge His supreme dominion over all created things—His mastership over life and death. Thus, sacrifice—the outward acknowledgment of this Divine supremacy—is the highest form of Divine worship, and, indeed, the only form that is set aside *exclusively* for God.

The adoration of God is technically called the worship of *latreia*. Then there is the Blessed Virgin, who, as the earthly Mother of the Divine Son, stands in a unique position, and who—though as truly a mere creature as we ourselves are—possesses an excellence entirely her own, albeit *infinitely* inferior to that of God. The worship paid to her has its own special name—*hyperdouleia*. After the excellence of Mary comes that of the Saints and Angels, whose worship is called simply *douleia*.

In English religious usage *adoration* is a term generally reserved for the self-abasement of man

Meaning
of term.

Adoration
of God ;
worship
of Mary
and
Saints.

Prudence
in use of
term
'adora-
tion.'

before his God, but not invariably so. For men often profess adoration for objects of human love, and yet are not suspected of any idolatry. So neither should St. Alphonsus, and those who use his fervent devotions to the Mother of Our Lord, be suspected when, in the exuberance of their love for her whom Our Lord loved first and most, and gave us for *our* Mother also, they use expressions of adoration in addressing her.

Perhaps, however, as a mere matter of *expediency* it is best in *public* prayers to abstain from such forms of address except with reference to *Divine* excellence, in order not to foster already existing Protestant prejudices. For the same reason, it may be well, perhaps, so to order our non-liturgical public services as not to convey the impression to non-Catholic visitors that we 'are only allowed to pray to the Virgin' (!)—a common error amongst them—say, in the matter of selecting our *popular hymns*. Though an almost invariable use of hymns to Our Lady may speak well for our own devotion to that Ever-Blessed Mother, it is apt to increase a common obstacle to conversions. For non-Catholics, it must be remembered, know little or nothing of the real inner life of Catholics—of the meaning of Holy Mass; of the fact that not a single *official* prayer or collect of the Catholic Church is personally addressed to Mary; of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, to His Precious Blood (and other small items of the kind!) which refute the charge of 'Mariolatry.'

In saying this, I am very far from suggesting

that we should eliminate a single Catholic feature from our popular services just to suit non-Catholic prejudices. It is merely a question of giving to others a due sense of *religious proportion*, such as really exists in our own minds in spite of occasional appearances.

The actual *practice* of devotion to Our Lady or the Saints—while a sign of a properly-developed Catholic faith—is *not of obligation under sin*, except when some act commanded by the Church under pain of sin happens to involve such devotion—*e.g.*, when a feast of Our Lady or of a national patron is a holiday of obligation, or some prayers to Our Lady are enjoined as a ‘penance’ in Confession, or are ordered by ecclesiastical authority. On the other hand, whole-hearted *belief* in the propriety and goodness of such devotions approved by the Church forms part of our faith, and is the immediate consequence of Catholic belief in the intercession of Saints. But there must be very incomplete Catholicity where there is *no sort of prayer* at least to Our Lady.

Now for a word or two on the *veneration of relics and images*. We saw that *latreia*, *douleia*, and *hyperdouleia* were the three degrees of worship and adoration. But these may be paid with the intervention of objects representing the person worshipped, such as images, pictures, medals, etc., or of objects connected with those persons, such as portions of their bodies or belongings. We have relic-worship in its natural form in every nation—for example, relics of Nelson, Wellington,

Practice of devotion to Our Lady and Saints not essential to faith.

Veneration of relics and images.

Washington, Napoleon.¹ In the supernatural order, we have the example of the man buried in contact with the bones of Eliseus, who was restored to life.²

'Relative'
worship.

Now, this form of exterior honour or worship is called *relative*, because the objects are venerated, not on their own account or for their intrinsic virtue as material things, but on account of their relation and moral connection with the persons deserving our veneration. According to the *degree* of veneration done to them, our *relative* worship will be either *latreia*, or *hyperdouleia*, or *douleia*.³

Adoration
of the
Cross.

For example, the adoration of the Cross (crucifix) on Good Friday morning, or the veneration of a relic of the True Cross, is *relative latreia*, for it is to the Divine Christ that our worship is directed. Kneeling before a statue of Our Lady is an act of *relative hyperdouleia*, not of *Divine* worship; or, before the statue of a saint, *relative douleia*.

The *external attitude* of body we assume does not determine the degree of our worship. That depends on our mental intention. Postures in worship differ widely amongst different races, just as every-day salutations do.

Meaning
of exterior
omage
conven-
tional.

The whole interpretation of external acts of worship depends upon the attitude of the worship-

¹ See 'My Clerical Friends,' pp. 143, 144.

² 4 Kings xiii. 21.

³ In a sense—not technical—all worship paid to anyone but God might be considered relative, since it is based upon nearness and dearness to Him. It is God Who is honoured in His Saints.

per's mind in making them; and as people know best what they mean by what are, after all, conventional signs, Catholics object to being set down as idolaters merely because they are seen bowing or kneeling before a statue of a saint, or kissing a crucifix or the foot of a statue of St. Peter.

Perhaps we have as lucid an explanation of *relative* worship as could be found in a passage from an old pre-Reformation pamphlet, already a reprint in the fifteenth century, entitled 'Dives et pauper.'¹ The writer represents the crucifix as being a book to the unlearned, but warns the reader against a mistaken use of it: 'In this manner I pray thee read thy book and fall down to the ground and thank thy God, Who would do so much for thee. Worship Him alone above all things—not the stock, nor the stone, nor the wood, but Him Who died on the tree of the Cross for thy sins and for thy sake. Thou shalt kneel if thou wilt *before* the image, but not *to* the image. Thou shalt worship *before* the thing, not *to* the thing: offer thy prayers *before* the thing, not *to* the thing, for it seeth thee not, heareth thee not, understandeth thee not. . . . Make thy pilgrimage not *to* the thing, not *for* the thing, for it may not help thee, but to Him and for Him that the thing represents. For if thou do it *for* the thing or *to* the thing thou doest idolatry.'

A pre-Reformation book on relative worship.

Referring to the adoration of the Cross by the

¹ Quoted by Abbot Gasquet, O.S.B., in a letter to the *Tablet*, May 21, 1898, p. 818. The italics are the present writer's.

clergy and people on Good Friday, the same author continues: 'The Cross that we creep to and worship so highly at that time is Christ Himself, Who died on the Cross on that day for our sins and our sake. He is that Cross, as all Doctors say, to Whom we pray and say: "Hail, thou Cross, our only hope."'

We may notice, by the way, the perfect uniformity of pre-Reformation doctrine and ritual in England—even down to such a detail as the use of the hymn *Vexilla Regis*, quoted at the end of the above passage—with our own Catholic belief and worship of to-day.

Devotion
to parti-
cular
shrines,
etc.

The virtue which Catholics seem always to have attached to *particular images* or statues, or certain much-frequented shrines and places of pilgrimage, whether called 'miraculous' or not, does not imply that they attribute any supernatural powers to the material objects or place itself, but have a conviction—founded upon experience—that Almighty God has chosen to work wonders by their means and to extend exceptional favour to supplications made in such spots. We recall the prayer of Solomon, and its insistence on the favourable hearing to be given to those who should pray 'in this place'—*i.e.*, his newly-built Temple.¹

¹ 2 Paral. vi. 21 and onwards.

No. VIII.

DUTIES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP—*continued.*

2. PRAYER.

PRAYER is the lifting up the created mind and heart to God. This may be done in the forms of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and other tributes paid to the various excellencies of the Divine Majesty, or else in the form of *petitions* for favours of different sorts. The first is the nobler kind of prayer, in as far as it is occupied with the Divine perfections rather than with our own needs, which form the subject of *petitions*. What is prayer, praise, and petition?

Prayer is an exercise of the virtue of *religion*—its chief exercise, if one excepts the *offering of sacrifice* to God. The Scriptures indeed speak of the ‘sacrifice of *praise*,’¹ of the sacrifice of ‘an afflicted spirit,’² but in a secondary and less strict sense. However, sacrifice properly so called—in Catholic worship, the Sacrifice of the Mass—is itself the prayer in action of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord in which we have the privilege of joining.

Prayer, taken in connection with faith, includes an exercise of that virtue—at least with those who have knowledge of God through revelation, and Prayer the food of faith.

¹ Ps. xlix. 23.

² Ps. l. 19.

not merely by the light of natural reason ; but it is also the *food and support* of faith. For communion with God and the things of God keep the soul in close contact with the truths of the world beyond our ken, which, because unseen, do not force themselves upon our notice as objects of sense do. Thus, unless they be constantly re-impressed upon the mind by contemplation of them, they are likely to become faint and dim, and even to pass altogether from our consideration. It is true that in Baptism the Holy Ghost infuses into the soul those three supernatural powers, or *habits*, as they are called, of faith, hope, and charity, and that of these only the last-named is ever forfeited by grievous sin—unless it be a sin *directly against* faith or hope. But these *habits* will lie in the soul like a seed in wintry ground, and remain practically inactive unless exercised as prayer exercises them ; they will cease to exert any influence on our lives and conduct and the result will be falls into sin.

Then, sin—especially of a more degraded and animal class—when long persevered in without repentance or periodic efforts to amend, has a *blinding* effect upon the spiritual sight of the soul, and makes the latter an easier prey to temptations against faith, and consequently against hope, which rests on faith.

Abandonment of prayer the beginning of evil.

Such, we take it, is the history of many a loss of faith among Catholics. The process began with abandonment of prayer ; long years of wallowing in sin followed ; and then 'difficulties' and self-

sufficient criticism of the faith and all belonging to it soon developed. A man easily becomes sceptical about truths that are a constant rebuke to his invariable *conduct*. So, if only out of self-respect, he will look about for some pseudo-intellectual pretext for his misdoings, which, by weakening the authority of Catholic principles, will help to deaden the sting which these are constantly fixing upon his conscience.

Meditation, or prayerful pondering over religious truths within the mind without verbal utterance, is particularly useful for impressing Divine truths upon the soul, and for exciting the will to act in harmony with their teaching. But this kind of prayer is not suitable for all alike, since—apart from some special gift of God not unfrequently given to illiterate people—it supposes certain mental qualities not possessed by all. Besides, there are amongst the educated not a few who find special difficulty in the practice of mental prayer. But the need of such persons is supplied by *vocal* prayer, which means the recital aloud, or secretly, of set forms of prayer either learnt by heart or read from a prayer-book.¹ Even for those capable of meditation an occasional use of vocal prayer is advisable. Otherwise worship will not be as perfect, since the external element of worship appertaining to the body will be lacking.

Mental
and vocal
prayer.

Of course, vocal prayer involves the attention

¹ 'Recital aloud'—*i.e.*, of prayers which are meant to be public: for the habit of *loudly whispering* private prayers is a nuisance to our fellow-worshippers.

Different
uses of the
mind in
vocal
prayer.

of the mind, and hence has its *mental* element. It will be useful here to translate a passage from St. Thomas Aquinas : 'It is to be observed, however, that there are three kinds of attention that can be applied to vocal prayer : the *first*, where a person attends to the *words* lest he make mistakes therein ; the *second*, where attention is paid to the *meaning* of the words ; and the *third*, where attention is directed towards the end (object) of the prayer—that is to say, to *God* and to the thing prayed for—which (form of attention) is specially necessary, and can be possessed even by the ignorant ; and sometimes this bent of the mind fixing itself on God may so strongly prevail that the mind loses sight of everything else, as Hugh of St. Victor says .'¹

For vocal
prayer the
under-
standing
of words
not
essential.

Hence it is unwise to ridicule nuns or others, who take part in Divine Office, or other services couched in Latin, on the ground that they do not understand the words they recite, as if theirs were a parrot-like performance. It is quite enough—nay, 'specially necessary'—that the mind should fix itself on God, even though the 'actual meaning of the words' be not understood. But *it is* understood far more than critics fancy.

Prayer
necessary
for salva-
tion, and
why.

In a very real sense prayer is *necessary for salvation*, being in God's providence the ordinary means of obtaining the helps we need for saving our souls.

We say that God *always* gives to saint and sinner alike *sufficient* grace to avoid sin, especially

¹ 'De Oratione,' q. lxxxiii., art. xiii.

mortal sin, which is the *only* insuperable obstacle to our gaining Heaven. This is literally and absolutely certain. The contrary spells heresy. But, notice, Almighty God is not bound, nor does it seem to be His usual practice, to give this sufficient grace *ready-made*, so to say, to one who does not seek His aid ; but rather He bestows the *materials* for it in the form of the *grace to pray*, and we, co-operating duly with this grace, are quite able to overcome the grievous temptation.¹ This *grace to pray* is never denied to anyone. A man can always pray (I do not say with ease, inclination, comfort), and God will never refuse to grant a prayer of *this* kind. So that it is true that He always places within man's reach sufficient help to avoid the loss of his soul.

But on our part there is often great *wastage* of grace. We do not exert our wills to work with it properly. Let me illustrate. A father and his boy on returning home find a huge packing-case blocking the doorway, and they cannot get into their house. If both father and boy pull sufficiently, the obstacle can be removed. The former does his part, which is the chief ; but the lazy boy does not do *his*, and the box is not removed. Take the father as representing God ; the boy, ourselves ; the box, the temptation, threatening to exclude us from our heavenly home ; the father's pull, grace ;

¹ Thus, to relieve a beggar who is starving for want of a few coppers, we may give him the coppers straight off, or we may make him earn them by doing some trifling job. The last method illustrates what we are saying.

and the boy's, our use of it—and the application of the parable is plain.

Prayer
com-
manded.

The Obligation to Pray.—Theologians teach us that prayer is positively *commanded*, and hold that it must be used *frequently*, the teaching of revelation as contained in the Bible being unmistakable on this point. 'Let nothing hinder thee from praying always.'¹ Our Lord, as the Evangelist tells us, spoke the parable of the Judge and the Importunate Widow to show 'that we ought always to pray, and not to fail.'² St. Paul, too, says: 'Pray without ceasing.'³ But when theologians come to inquire what *degree* of frequency is commanded, they are unable—for want of data—to arrive at any precise result. Practically speaking, even a far from fervent Catholic will abundantly satisfy the *precept*, though he may by no means satisfy his spiritual need. That need imperatively claims to be considered. This life of ours—particularly for younger people—is full of great temptations and trials. Some, again, are tempted with exceptional violence to indulge one passion or another. So people need to remember that God gives His help—His abundant help—for the asking: 'Ask, and you shall receive.'⁴

Prayer
morning
and night.

Morning and Night Prayers.—This is a very general practice adopted throughout the Church

¹ Ecclus. xviii. 22.

² St. Luke xviii. 1.

³ 1 Thess. v. 17.

⁴ St. John xvi. 24. 'Always,' of course, does not mean that we must be praying all day, any more than advice given to one who neglected his meals, that 'he must eat always,' would mean that he was to eat the livelong day.

even by less fervent Catholics, though not, perhaps, without occasional omissions. In some Catholic households they are most laudably said in common, at least, night prayers. For it may be a most laudable family practice to attend daily Mass in a neighbouring church—the best of all morning prayers; or again, perhaps, instead of meeting at other times, the rosary is recited in common daily, at some convenient hour.

It is true that, strictly speaking, there is no obligation under sin of any kind to say prayers in the early morning or at night. But sensible folk, who realize the dire need which we all have of help and strength to face the temptations, trials, sufferings, and perplexities of life, will see how desirable it is to impress this practice *most strongly* upon children *from the first*, and *to adopt it themselves*. With very many, neglect of morning and night prayers means *practically* that they never pray—or, it may even be, never so much as think of God from one Sunday Mass to another. No averagely tempted soul is likely to thrive on this starvation diet, whatever be the strict obligation by *precept*. Sometimes, too, there will be venial sin in the omission *incidentally*; that is, not on account of the *mere* omission itself, but owing to a venially sinful *motive* for omitting—*e.g.*, human respect, sheer indifference and laziness, or, with extremely foolish young folk, the pleasure of shocking others or of flying in the face of advice.

Surely a Christian—let alone a Catholic—must see something indecent in taking another day of

Plea for
morning
prayers.

life and health from the Divine Goodness without a 'thank you,' thus beginning the day, spiritually speaking, like a dog, who gets up and shakes himself, and then goes about his ordinary pursuits with his tail a-wagging. Compare such treatment of God and of one's soul with the elaborate morning toilette which people consider necessary for resuming intercourse with their fellow-creatures, and for the health, delight, and adornment of their corruptible bodies! I say nothing as to *length* of prayers; but it is surely a disgrace that there should be *none*—not even a morning offering. I doubt if an ordinary Mohammedan would omit his morning devotions towards the east.

And for
night
prayers.

Then, again, are our days so cram-full of holiness, so free from all sin, that we can lay ourselves down to rest without pausing to thank God for His mercies—those we know and the many others we know not; to adore His wondrous patience with us, and seek pardon for the sinful provocation we have given it? To many a Catholic that act of contrition at night has been the sole preparation vouchsafed him for the coming of 'the thief in the night,'¹ and a sudden call 'before the tribunal of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the flesh.'²

Grace at
meals.

It is a sad pity if the time-honoured though not strictly *obligatory* custom of Christians, Protestant as well as Catholic, of saying 'grace' before and after meals, either privately or in common, should be rapidly dying out in English society. That 'it

¹ 1 Thess. v. 2.

² 2 Cor. v. 10.

is not done now in Society,' with a big S—as some aver—may be a fact. It would certainly be a disgusting one, as showing that Society was actively extending its favourite pastime of hustling Almighty God off the pavement of life. The blame, of course, falls to those whose wretched worldliness inspired them to set so godless and unchristian a fashion. Perhaps those who have given up the custom themselves teach it, notwithstanding, to their children, a process which is like to produce upon a child's mind the impression that saying 'grace' stands much on a par with other matters of nursery or school-room discipline, such as wiping your boots carefully on the mat after a walk, or not eating pudding until you have taken the last scrap of meat.

But the ukase against 'grace' that may have gone forth from a fashionable autocracy affords no sort of excuse to Catholics for following suit *in their own private households* at any set meal whatsoever. As far as I know, Society does not provide the general public with meals, nor, still less, with the faculties of mind and body necessary for earning the price of them. God has done both.

How far it is expedient that one should be *observed* to say 'grace' at *non-Catholic tables* or in public dining-rooms will depend largely upon actual circumstances. But to omit this acknowledgment of God's providence universally, on the general supposition that 'people will think it so peculiar,' seems to be little better than 'blaming upon others'—to use the popular phrase—our

'Grace'
in Pro-
testant
company

own cowardly human respect. Besides, it may often happen that what will appear more 'peculiar' (in a known Catholic) is the *omission*. Still, there is never any need to make the largest sign of the Cross that the length of our right arm can compass.

A concluding word on *distractions*.

Distrac-
tions.

What is a distraction? It is turning our mind from prayer to other things not properly connected with it *when we purport to be praying*. So it is a different thing from a *deliberate interruption* of prayer made for some reasonable cause—say, to rest awhile, to see if someone we want to speak to afterwards is in church, to remove some cause of discomfort in kneeling, to attend to some forgotten and pressing point of duty, etc. There is no law obliging us to pray *consecutively* for a definite length of time, and *where there is no law* to check our liberty *there can be no sin*—a useful rule, and one of wide application to fidgety souls. Such an interruption may be even virtuous—say, for the purpose of doing an act of charity which circumstances seem to call for: *e.g.*, helping a blind man to his place, or assisting a person who is taken ill, or finding the right place in a prayer-book for a fellow-worshipper in difficulties. There is such a thing as *selfishness in pieties*. Charity is the fulfilment of the law.

But to speak of distractions properly so called.

Without taking special precautions, such as are not really feasible for one in a thousand of the laity, it is a moral impossibility to escape all distrac-

tions, even during a short period of prayer. But (1) these are not even *venial sins* unless they be *wilful*—either because freely *continued after advertence* to the wandering, or because at the time of prayer we do *knowingly* what will certainly cause distractions. I say ‘at time of prayer,’ because there is no obligation under *sin* at other times to avoid possible causes of distraction. The taking of such remoter precautions is a matter of pure perfection—that is, provided it does not interfere with duty. For, a student who neglected his studies, or a pious wife who shirked domestic duties, for fear of incurring distractions in prayer, would be the reverse of perfect. Our Blessed Lord, on account of the wonderful perfection of His Human Nature, had the fullest control over all the avenues of His Soul, so that no thought could occupy His mind except with the full consent of His human will. As for ourselves, the *best* we shall probably achieve is the habit of *promptly* and *easily* ejecting the intruder when, in spite of us, he puts his foot across the threshold of our mind and imagination. Some characters find concentration of mind very difficult always, and so the difficulty turns up also in their prayers.

It is set down as a *marvel* of Divine grace that Aloysius Gonzaga felt it as a positive pain to *withdraw* his mind from God. Our pain is generally of the contrary sort. But, for the comfort of our weakness, another great Saint, and prince of theologians, the great St. Thomas Aquinas, of

the venerable Order of St. Dominic, tells us that *involuntary* distractions do not destroy the *merit* of our prayer (and consequently its grace-procuring efficacy), on account of the intention of worshipping God with which we began it. The elevating influence of this original intention is only interfered with by *deliberate* wandering, which the Saint tells us is a sin. But he also explains that a distracted prayer is not one that will sensibly comfort or refresh the soul, these further effects requiring attention. Still, the fruit of prayer *as a means of grace* remains—though all its effects be not produced in their entirety.

Guilt of
wilful
distrac-
tion.

2. *Wilful* distractions are never more than *venially* sinful in ordinary prayer, except the *subject* of the distraction be otherwise sinful: for example, a distraction at the sight of an enemy which works up into deliberate hatred or desire of grave revenge—and so on of other imaginations that would be wrong even *out of* prayer-time.

Prayer
not to be
given up
on ac-
count of
difficul-
ties.

Distractions, natural disinclination to prayer, temptations of *whatever* kind occurring during it, do not, as we have seen, destroy the essential merit and fruit of prayer, if *displeasing* to us. They may even *add to its merit*. There cannot be a more fatal delusion than to *give up* prayer on their account. It is a case of: "Lord, I suffer violence; answer Thou for me."¹ When Our Lord suffered Himself to experience deadly terror at the prospect of the bitter chalice of suffering and shame which He had to drink, 'being in an agony, He prayed

¹ Isa. xxxviii. 14.

*the longer.*¹ At least, let us not pray the *shorter* on account of troubles. If we abandon prayer on their account, the enemy of our souls—who is no fool—will take care to supply us with a goodly store of such commodities. For prayer is his worst enemy.

¹ St. Luke xxii. 43.

No. IX.

A. SINS AGAINST RELIGION BY EXCESS.

SUPERSTITIOUS PRACTICES.

Two
kinds of
irreligion.

RELIGION can be sinned against either by *excess* or by *deficiency* in religious observances. How by excess—it may be asked? Of course, no excess is possible either in the *amount* or in the *fervour* of religious observance (unless—in case of the amount being *optional*—other duties imposed by Almighty God be neglected). For no creature could do too much for Almighty God in either respect—nor even *enough*, except through the Mass, by uniting with which we share in the most perfect and *adequate* adoration of the Sacred Heart of Our Saviour, Who in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar worships His Father in our name. The excess of religion must therefore lie in our *wrong practice* of it; that is to say, as St. Thomas Aquinas tells us, either because we pay it to an object not deserving of worship, or else, while worshipping in the right direction, we worship in a *wrong way*—*i.e.*, by introducing false methods into our worship.

Supersti-
tion.

Excess in religious worship is called *superstition*, which term implies the *addition* of something. Now, this addition may be in the form of *false* worship—that performed (however unwittingly) by all religions except the true one; or, again, the

thing added may be simply *superfluous* and uncalled for, without being in itself wrong or false.

Thus, it would be *false* worship to use Jewish rites, which, being symbolical of Christ *yet to come*, deny the Incarnation; or to expose relics to veneration which are *known* to be spurious; or to spread about reports of fictitious miracles—say, for the purpose of establishing or spreading some special devotion; or to represent some incident or miracle as being in the Bible, when it is not.

Speaking in general, superstition of the above Guilt. kind is grievously sinful, although thoughtlessness or pious *intentions* may reduce some of its forms to *venial* guilt.

Superstitions of the *superfluous* sort—that is to say, which introduce some extraneous element into worship—are as a class only *venially* sinful, since they do not greatly adulterate the purity or destroy the uniformity of religious worship. For example, if a priest were to mix private vocal prayers of his own with the prayers of Mass.

This appears to be a fitting place to say a word concerning minor forms of superstition which may possibly vitiate otherwise good and holy religious practices. The general feature of such faults is that a Catholic may attach an *infallible* efficacy to some particular devotional practice without having any real ground for so doing; *e.g.*, he wears a *miraculous medal*, not merely *hoping* for the *special* protection of Our Lady while wearing it devoutly in her honour—which, in

Superstition in devotions—how possible?

accordance with the universal sense of the Church, he is perfectly right in doing—but looking for this result as *infallibly* connected with his carrying the medal. Or, again, he wears the Brown Scapular, or practises the Nine Fridays in honour of the Sacred Heart, and thinks he will *infallibly* be saved, however careless he be otherwise about his Christian obligations.

I give these as *theoretic* examples, for, owing, perhaps, to my limited experience in the past, I have yet to meet the averagely sane Catholic who shows real symptoms of such idiotic follies. No doubt it is *possible* that the uneducated may—for want of proper instruction—introduce some slightly superstitious elements into their devotions.

Imaginary
supersti-
tion.

But a captious critic of the philosophic sort may think he sees superstition where none exists. Because the devout person seems to count infallibly upon the result desired, it does not follow that he or she attributes the infallibility to the *mere act*, or *pious object* of devotion, as though it were a charm or a spell. This has specially to be borne in mind by travellers from the less imaginative North to those Catholic countries where faith is extremely vivid and the people seem quite as much at home with the next world as others are with this. We will suppose that an Englishman visiting Italy or Spain sees some poor peasant mother, who has a child dying at home, lighting a votive candle at some favourite shrine of Our Lady, or hanging a blessed medal round the

child's neck, and that he afterwards hears the woman expressing the *firmest conviction* that now her child will recover. Before he accuses her of superstition, let him make sure that this fixity of conviction does not rest mainly on her enviably strong *faith*, and consequent invincible *hope*, in the power and goodness of God and in the value of Our Lady's intercession with Him. Yet this is probably the true explanation in nine out of ten cases. There is no superfluity of religion here—except what we may well beg of God to add to our bare sufficiency.

Yet if such things were superstitions, they would compare very favourably with real ones Real superstition of educated Catholics and clung to pertinaciously by many educated people, even Catholics—such as the 'thirteen at table' folly, the cult of the 'lucky' horseshoe, or the avoidance of journeys on Fridays—the day when the best fortune that this world has ever known befell it. These observances are *venially sinful*, except for what the dear old Biddy called 'incon-saveable' ignorance.

We need not delay in discussing *idolatry*, or the Idolatry. worship of idols, of creatures, or of emblems in the place of God. There is, no doubt, the figurative idolatry of *sin*; for all sin may be reduced to the worship of self in place of God. Thus, St. Paul speaks of certain 'enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is The idolatry of sin and worldliness. their belly, and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things.'¹ But idolatry taken in

¹ Phil. lii. 19.

the above secondary sense does not fall specially under the present Commandment.

Divination.

Divination—or inquiry into hidden things by invoking the aid of the Evil One, either *expressly* or *virtually*. Expressly to invoke the devil, though a proof of a firm belief in his existence and activity, such as some people would do well to have more of, is always a *very grievous sin*.

Express recourse to Satan.

Virtual recourse.

But the kind of divination more likely to be practised is the *virtual*—that is, doing what involves Satanic intervention, while, perhaps, utterly and honestly disavowing any intention of using the aid of Satan.

Planchette.

Let us suppose that a young lady *seriously* seeks to know what is absolutely hidden, or what is to come—say, the time and manner of her death, the person who wants to marry her, etc.—by the aid of *planchette* and ‘automatic’ writing, or any similar process, putting absolute reliance upon the result to be obtained.

If accused of dealing with the devil, she scorns the idea. But scorn it as she may, the truth remains—

Why preternatural effects are virtual devilry.

1. That information such as she seeks is not obtainable by *natural* means.

2. Given that the means are beyond the natural, they must be supplied either by the preternatural help of Satan (supposing him to possess such knowledge) or the supernatural help of God.

Does she imagine that the Majesty of God stands at her beck and call whenever she takes it into her foolish, curious head to kill time

in a country house by turning to *planchette*? Hardly. Then, there only remains one power that conceivably could help her—a diabolical one. So *by her act*—not by any express intention—she is virtually invoking the aid of the devil.

But she might urge in her defence an argument somewhat similar to the one urged above against her, in reference to Almighty God. ‘Am I to suppose that the devil would think it worth his while to aid me whenever “my foolish, curious head,” as you politely call it, takes a fancy for *planchette*?’ It is quite conceivable. For such superstitions have a most demoralizing effect upon the soul, alienating it from God and unfitting it for the practice of religion. Moreover, they may easily lead to grievous sins of other kinds. Objectively speaking and under the above conditions, the lady in question would be committing *mortal* sin—unless she could honestly allege in her defence, by way of reducing her guilt to venial sin, either (a) that she did not attach full faith to the result that should be obtained, or (b) that she did not act with any serious intention of ascertaining what was occult, but was merely idly amusing herself. The example here elaborated will serve as a type of many other cases, and gives the broad principles by which to test whether a practice be *virtual* devilry or not.

Let me add a further principle, laid down by St. Alphonsus Liguori and other theologians. They tell us that when in *doubt* as to whether a given phenomenon be preternatural (or super-

Worth
Satan's
while.

Principle
for judg-
ing char-
acter of
pheno-
mena.

Care in its
applica-
tion.

natural) we should incline rather in favour of its being *natural*. In other words, such an exception to the ordinary laws by which this lower world is governed has to be *proved*. As their reason, the authorities referred to urge the fact that Nature embraces more resources than we reckon of, and that it actually produces effects which, although admittedly natural, defy explanation. But this rule must be most carefully understood to refer to doubts *founded on solid reasons* suggested by the particular phenomenon in question, which point to its being a purely natural effect. It will *not* serve as a general and vague *assumption* to be applied in all cases indiscriminately and without examination. In other words, we are not justified in reasoning thus: 'I don't know what to think about this result, but it's sure to be all right; for, as we all know, nature possesses many mysterious powers, and perhaps this is one of them.' A sweeping assumption of this sort would logically lead us to explain away all those supernatural wonders called *miracles*, including those wrought by Our Lord to confirm His Divine mission to men, and thus one of the evidences of Christianity would be discredited.

Dreams.

Dreams.—To believe in dreams is not *in itself* sinful, as is plain from many instances in the Old and New Testaments. But this belief must not be a blind one: it should rest upon an examination of their nature—whether they be good, and whether their tendency or drift be also virtuous and worthy of Almighty God.

Thus, for instance, a dream in which I seem to be avenging an injury done me has a sinful nature. One in which I am winning a racing bet lately made could only be irreverently regarded as a communication from heaven.

To *rely* upon omens is also wrong, though Omens. for the same sort of reason as above-mentioned under 'Planchette,' (a) and (b), the sin would very frequently be *venial* only.

Consultations with *fortune-tellers*, or their more fashionable duplicates, palmists and clairvoyants, Fortune-telling,
palmistry. of either gender, for *ascertaining the future* or *absolutely hidden things*, will often fall short of mortal sin through not being taken seriously. And though, in spite of *my* not being serious, I may still sin by co-operating with a palmist, etc., who seriously claims occult knowledge, yet very commonly such practitioners are no worse than charlatans who see their way to eking out a more or less honest livelihood at the expense of the foolishly curious.

There seems to be no sin—even in the form of scandal—in spending a trifle on the amusement of merely getting one's character delineated by some '—ist' or other. For character may be read with natural skill, quite apart from bumps, lines, and handwriting. So a conjuror, by mysterious passes, draws off the attention from the real means by which his illusion is effected. In any case there is nothing wrong, or perhaps unreasonable, in a person's believing that habits of mind may leave bodily traces and affect handwriting.

Where
wrong
begins.

But once the oracle undertakes to tell the future or reveal the hidden, the limits of lawfulness are overstepped and wrong begins; and yet not every oracular statement couched in the form of a prophecy really constitutes a prediction.

'You will marry, and your husband will be wealthy,' may simply amount to a delineation of character. For, the first part may pretty safely be predicted of most women—if they get the chance—and the second part may follow from a love of money, of which there may be external indications visible to a keen observer.

TABLE-TURNING AND SPIRITUALISM.

Table-
turning,
spiritual-
ism.

It is always sinful to practise what is called *table-turning* for the purpose of obtaining a manifestly preternatural result: *e.g.*, to find out what cannot possibly be known to any of those taking part—say, whether a certain person is in a state of grace, is going to live long, etc. For this is evidently *divination*—a grievous sin.¹ Neither may those, who doubt whether preternatural effects will result, proceed to try the point as an experiment. For though their purpose—*viz.*, the obtaining of knowledge—is lawful, the means used

¹ If some of the party know what is inquired after, it is, perhaps, possible that his knowledge may affect his physical action, and so naturally bring about the phenomena witnessed.

for this is not, and the end never justifies the use of unlawful means. If, however, the effect sought for—viz., the rotation of the table *by the unconsciously concerted action of hands* (not by the mere action of the *will*)—be in all probability a *natural* effect, this physical experiment will be lawful, *unless* forbidden by ecclesiastical authority—e.g., out of fear lest people should be led on by curiosity to a *superstitious use* of the phenomenon. Such forbiddance may become, in places, absolutely necessary, and must be respected by those living under the jurisdiction of the authority forbidding.

By *spiritualism* is meant consulting invisible spirits through the intervention of a third person credited with special qualifications for communicating with the unseen world, and who is called a *medium*—a sort of ‘showman’ for the spirits. This form of occult inquiry is generally directed towards exploring the mysteries of the other world.

This practice is absolutely forbidden, and is *grievously* sinful. It is a form of *express* invocation of the devil through the agency of a third party. For if we suppose a case of real spiritualism—and not one of those admirable illusions which baffle an audience at the Egyptian Hall—these spirits cannot be other than devils, since it is utterly absurd to suppose that the blessed spirits in Heaven or in Purgatory are handed over to the pleasure of every neurotic creature that poses as a medium, or who seeks to make a living out of

Spiritualism.

Grievously sinful.

Spirits evoked, if real, are bad ones.

ghosts. Nor is there any vestige of a reason for supposing that, as a regular thing, the souls of the lost in hell are permitted to have communication with the living. Hence, it is always sinful to take any part in the *summoning of spirits*, or in consulting with them about anything whatever.

The flimsy excuse put forward by some, that the spirits they consult are 'good' spirits, to whom they present pious petitions, will not justify the proceeding, as Rome expressly decreed in March, 1898. For the superstitious wrong of it consists in the mere fact of 'raising' spirits.

Visions of
Saints not
parallel
cases.

The sin does not consist in the bare fact of communication with the other world, for there is much of this in the lives of Catholic Saints. But here the first advance is made from the other side of the veil; whereas spiritualism is an intrusion from this side—a sort of trespass upon God's domain.

Exposure
of sus-
pected
fraud
lawful.

It would, however, be lawful—in the case of a 'medium' of whose *imposture* there were reliable signs—to ask for a séance with a view to showing up the fraud.¹ But this may not be done wholesale, as if one assumed in general that such exhibitions were *never* more than clever illusions. The Second Provincial Council of Baltimore, while

¹ Thus, according to newspaper reports, Mr. Maskelyne some while ago attended a notable séance, and afterwards discomfited the fraudulent medium by showing 'how the trick was done.' Even from a Catholic point of view the famous illusionist did right—nay, rendered a service.

admitting the prevalence of trickery, adds, nevertheless: 'It can scarcely be doubted, however, that some of these [*i.e.*, spiritualistic manifestations] must be attributed to diabolical intervention, since they can hardly be explained in any other way.'

They also sin grievously who assist at an exhibition of real 'table-turning' or 'spiritualism' in such a way as to favour it or cause serious scandal to others. Sin may also be committed by exposing one's self to being drawn into joining the spiritualists, who now often form a pseudo-religious sect entirely at variance with the Catholic Faith. From this point of view, Spiritualism is to be treated according to the rules governing our dealings with false religions.¹

Attend-
ance at
such
séances
unlawful.

Spiritual-
ism as a
false
religion.

Hypnotism—the modern successor of *mesmerism*, or *animal magnetism*. The scientific explanations of these two phenomena, put forward by the initiated, are not the same. But from the point of view of Christian ethics there is no appreciable difference between the two; so theology reasonably applies the same rules and Roman decrees to both.

Hypno-
tism.

We may draw a distinction between what may be called (1) *ordinary* and normal hypnotism, and (2) *extraordinary* and abnormal—I mean, of course, as regards the effects produced: that is to say, between hypnotism produced by moral methods and exhibiting certain more or less constant results in all cases—some of which are also verified in the case of a somnambulist,

Lawful
hypno-
tism and
unlawful.

¹ See pp. 33-40.

Condi-
tions for
lawful use.

e.g., a walking-sleep attended by an abeyance of will-power, insensibility, intense receptiveness of any suggestion made by the hypnotizer, and docility to his behests and the like—and hypnotism which invests the subject with superhuman powers not possessed at other times, such as acquaintance with languages or sciences not known previously, knowledge of future events, ability to describe minutely what is happening at a great distance, etc. *Ordinary* hypnotism is not wrong in itself, since it appears to be free from superstition or recourse—direct or indirect—to unearthly agencies. But since it temporarily deprives the patient of the use of reason, a grave cause is required to justify its use—just as a grave cause is needed, and commonly exists, for the use of chloroform or other anæsthetics for preventing violent pain. Moreover, since hypnotism gives the operator great control over his patient's mind—weakening or suspending its power of resistance to practical suggestions—still greater precautions are evidently needed against abuse than in the administration of anæsthetics.

Mere curiosity on the part of hypnotized or hypnotizer would not suffice as a reason for experimenting.

Good
effects ob-
tainable.

Ordinary hypnotism, in the hands of trustworthy physicians, may have *good uses*. Since the hypnotized person readily assimilates suggestions, the drunkard's craving for liquor, for instance, may be greatly weakened, if not wholly eradicated, through an aversion to intoxicants

being suggested to him by the operator during the hypnotic trance.

Amateurs insufficiently acquainted with all the bearings of hypnotism, and the conditions under which it may be safely used, do great wrong by hypnotizing, just as much as they would by attempting surgical operations without scientific knowledge of surgery.

Since hypnotism deprives the subject for a time of the use of reason, his consent is *always* necessary for lawfulness.

In decrees or instructions issued by the Holy See concerning *animal magnetism*, and which, as has been said, theologians apply to hypnotism, a marked distinction is drawn between its employment resulting in certain exceptional and immoral phenomena, and its ordinary scientific use under proper physical and moral safeguards. Moreover, no decree has been issued condemning hypnotism in particular.

Further—as a modern moral theologian of repute notices—the Sacred Office of the Inquisition (July 26, 1899) replied to a doctor, who had asked concerning the lawfulness of certain hypnotic experiments performed by him, that they were lawful provided there had been no danger of superstition or scandal; and as regards some contemplated experiments, that these would not be lawful if the phenomena resulting clearly exceeded natural powers; but that if doubt existed on this head, then the said experiments might be

tolerated provided he openly disclaimed any meddling with the preternatural.

An important consideration.

Let me end this topic by pressing upon my readers a seemingly most important consideration, which may induce them to keep *entirely aloof* from all such uncanny arts as those we have been reviewing.

Evils of occult arts apart from devilry.

People are wont to allege in their defence that they perceive no sign of the preternatural, and, further, have reasons to give for this persuasion. Now, I make bold to say that, abstracting wholly from the question whether there be devilry or not, *there is still harm* to dabblers in these arts, and often such unmistakably *grievous* harm as to bear an unpleasant resemblance to *mortal* sin or the wilful *occasion* thereof. Not a sin of devil-dealing, let us concede, but a sin of serious and utterly wanton injury to body or to soul, or to *both*. By such practices people, especially of the more impressionable sex—who are athirst for new and exciting sensations and experiences—seek to pry into secrets which God, in His wise and loving providence, does not wish them to penetrate, and which they have not the strength to bear. They curiously pull aside the veil, and they are often oppressed and crushed by the forbidden knowledge, or what poses as such—what, at all events, they are silly enough to believe, and take seriously to heart.

Injury to health.

In the case of some of these occult arts the nervous system is largely drawn upon. 'It tires me too much,' is a not uncommon protest when a

request is made for a repetition of the experiment, in which ordinary bodily exertion does not appear.

In those practices where an absolutely passive state of mind is required, and the will is surrendered to another person, the will-power is apt to be weakened—a serious drawback to virtuous living. Then the ‘answers’ received, with those who are sensitive or delicate, are calculated to produce fatalistic impressions, morbid broodings, and deep depression—not to mention development of suicidal tendencies.¹ At all events a dreamy, introspective, thoroughly unhealthy condition of mind is fostered, which renders prayer, devotion, earnest practice of religion, and application to the serious duties of one’s state, almost impossible.

Injury to
mind.

Morbid
disposi-
tion
fostered.

I hardly think any appreciable spiritual good will ever be got out of the soul of one habitually given to these weird pursuits.

So, devilry or no devilry, there seems no better advice to give in the present matter than this: Have nothing to do with these forms of idling. *Don’t so much as touch them with a pair of tongs!*

Best
advice.

¹ The daily Press has reported various instances in which the miserable suicide has left it in writing that spiritualism had been the cause of his unnatural crime.

No. X.

B. SINS AGAINST RELIGION BY DEFECT.

I. TEMPTING GOD.

Express
tempting
of God.

TEMPTING God is the performance or omission of something for the purpose of testing whether God possesses the attributes and perfections attributed to Him. To do an action for this *express purpose* is the worst form of this grievous sin, since it includes a *doubt* of the teachings of faith concerning the nature of God. 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

Take a case—not unknown—where a disbeliever denies the existence of God, and then challenges Him, watch in hand, to vindicate His honour by instant punishment. The cry of Our Lord's enemies round the Cross, 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,' was a disbelieving challenge to Divine Omnipotence of the same description.

Equiva-
lent
tempting.

But this kind of *express* temptation of God is not so common amongst us. There is more danger of the sin in its *virtual* or *equivalent* shape—that is to say, when a person believes in God's goodness, power, etc., but *practically demands* a Divine intervention in his favour.

Christ
thus
tempted
in the
desert.

It was to this form of sin that Satan tempted Christ in the desert, when he bade Him cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple,

bidding Him rely upon the protection of Angels.¹ Satan, on his part, was guilty of *express* tempting, because *he* doubted whether Our Lord was possessed of Divine powers or not.

So, too, the *judicial tests*—never officially sanctioned by the Church—which were practised in England and elsewhere, and called ‘judgments of God,’ were wholly unlawful, though, no doubt, employed in ignorance. For example, the ‘ordeal by fire,’ in which the accused was forced to walk barefoot on red-hot coals or to plunge his hand into the fire. If unburnt he was adjudged to be innocent. Clearly this was, so to speak, forcing God to work a miracle in defence of the right, in order to relieve the court from its perplexities.

Medieval
‘ordeals,’

Those who *in grave illness refuse medical help* easily obtainable, or neglect *ordinary* natural remedies, expecting God to heal them, are tempting God. This seems to be an error of the ‘Peculiar People.’ It is generally a mortal sin, like all tempting of God, but ignorance may excuse; or, if the malady be slight, the fault will be *venial*; and there will be no sin if the person ailing piously hopes that God will heal him through natural means.

Refusing
natural
remedies
in sick-
ness.

It is also equivalent to tempting God for a person to run *wantonly* and *needlessly* into some great danger, from which nothing but a miracle can save him. For example, if he fasted from *all* food and drink during Lent, expecting God to preserve life, but always excepting the case of special Divine inspiration to do this. Thus, many

Rash ex-
posure to
dangers.

¹ St. Matt. iv. 5-7.

things that we read of in the lives of Saints would be sinful in us who have not the same special guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Condi-
tions for
seeking a
miracle.

There is no wrong, however, in *asking God to perform a miracle*, provided there be a grave reason, such as for procuring the salvation of souls, or bringing about the fulfilment of the Divine Will.

It is also lawful *to seek a miracle* for recovering one's own health, or another person's, provided this be done with resignation to the Will of God.

Risks to
life at
miracu-
lous wells.

What is to be thought of the action of sick people who, for example, plunge into icy cold waters at St. Winifride's Well, or at Lourdes, sometimes running the risk (humanly speaking) of serious injury, or even death? Is not this a *virtual* tempting of God? No, it is not, if done under certain conditions.

How
justified.

1. There must be a grave cause, such as inability to get relief from a grave malady by ordinary means. Many of these devout pilgrims are hopeless cases from the medical point of view.

2. There is no question of forcing the hand of Almighty God such as occurs in *virtual* temptation of God, but, rather, a confident hope that, through the intercession of Our Lady or St. Winifride, He will be pleased to heal them and glorify His Holy Mother or His Saint, accompanied by resignation in the event of His refusing to exert His power.

3. Many of those who have really incurred grave risk to life by such immersions—or else their relatives—have, after very earnest prayer, been conscious of a vivid inspiration of faith to seek

healing after this manner—an inspiration attended by a most *absolute conviction* that a cure would be obtained, as in fact it was. Now, such people, so far from presuming to tempt God or doing anything equivalent to this, feel, on the contrary, that it is rather God Who invites them to receive proof of His Divine goodness and power.

The same defence cannot be made for frivolously ^{Abuses,} pious persons who are fond of experimenting lightly with relics or 'holy water,' on the chance of something marvellous turning up.

No. XI.

B. SINS AGAINST RELIGION BY DEFECT—
Continued.

2. SACRILEGE.

Sacrilege. SACRILEGE is a sin by which some *sacred thing, person, place, or rite, is irreverently violated or profaned*; irreverence to God committed through irreverent treatment of what is set aside for His service, and is thus connected with Him.

Three
kinds of
sacrilege.

Thus, there are *three kinds* of sacrilege, according as the outrage is done to sacred (1) things, (2) persons, (3) places.

Sacrile-
gious re-
ception of
Sacra-
ments.

Sacred Things.—(a) First in order come the Seven Sacraments instituted by Christ, and applying the merits of His Precious Blood to our souls. It is a grievous sacrilege to receive any Sacrament unworthily or invalidly—*i.e.*, by consciously failing to supply the necessary dispositions and conditions needed for its proper reception. Thus, making a ‘bad’ confession — by concealing a clear *mortal* sin, or confessing without any sorrow—marrying a Protestant in defiance of Church rules for ‘mixed’ marriages—*e.g.*, marrying at the registrar’s or in a non-Catholic place of worship—all these are examples of grievous sacrilege.¹

¹ The Catechism says that a bad confession—through concealment of grievous sin—is ‘telling a lie to the Holy Ghost.’ This does not mean, however, that any untruth told

Receiving Our Blessed Lord in Holy Communion into our souls when these are defiled by conscious mortal sin is a sacrilege of an *aggravated* type on account of the Real Presence. If such sacrileges be committed out of *malice* and *contempt* for religion, there would be the extra guilt of *blasphemy*.

(b) Sacred vessels, dedicated to the use of the altar or for employment in Sacramental rites—relics and sacred images or pictures—the Sacred Scriptures, altars. But not every irreverence towards these amounts to *mortal* sin, if there be no *contempt* involved, and there appear to be no *serious* indignity done to God or His Saints. Where ill-treatment results from an *accident* there will be *no sin at all*, except sometimes through *really culpable* negligence.

Here it may be observed that no sacrilege at all is committed against the Blessed Sacrament by a communicant who, through some unintentional clumsiness in receiving, causes the Sacred Host to fall on the Communion-cloth or upon the ground. Nor should people be scandalized or cry ‘Sacrilege!’ because—on wonderfully rare occasions—the Sacred Host slips from the priest’s fingers, or the priest falls with the ciborium while distributing Communion. Bad sight, insensibility of touch—from cold, or imperfect circulation in the early morning before taking any food—

in Confession makes it a bad one. For this, the untruth must be such as hides something which the penitent is bound to tell *under pain of mortal sin*.

nervousness, the accidental adhesion of particle to particle, and last—but by no means least—the varied awkwardnesses of communicants ill-trained in the manner of receiving, barriers set up by veils or hat-fashions—any of these causes may easily produce an entirely blameless accident on the priest's side. No irreverence is done to Our Lord, because none is *intended*, or could be humanly foreseen. Our Blessed Lord in so lovingly instituting this marvellous Sacrament of the Eucharist, and handing Himself over so completely to the Sacramental control of us clumsy mortals, foresaw unerringly the necessary consequences of His generous self-sacrifice, and in His Divine unselfishness fully accepted the inevitable loss to His external dignity.

Care
not to be
scrupulous.

We cannot really hurt or harm Him. For in the Eucharist, as in heaven, He is glorious and impassible. Given, therefore, that mishaps are purely unexpected accidents, there is no harm done on our side, either. All the same it behoves us, out of reverence and gratitude, to omit no *ordinary* and *reasonable* precautions against accidents, such as instructing ourselves in the way of receiving Communion skilfully, and, in general, taking ordinary, but not *fidgety*, care in our treatment of His Most Holy Sacrament. The tender watchfulness of Mary and Joseph over Jesus in His dependent infancy may serve as our model in this respect.

Scriptural
jests.

Making a burlesque of Bible texts for obscene jests, or for any other grievously sinful purpose, is

a *grave sacrilege*. Mere jokes—in themselves unobjectionable—would usually be *venially* sinful; or if, in the particular circumstances, the pleasantry does not produce an impression of irreverence towards Holy Writ, there will be *no sin at all*.

(c) Sacred vestments and altar paraphernalia which are *blessed* in view of their use for Divine worship may also be sacrilegiously profaned—*e.g.*, altar-cloths. But not everything so blessed is sacred to the same extent—*e.g.*, houses, ships, bread, fruits of the earth, and other things meant for *secular* uses, which receive the Church's blessing, but are not dedicated to sacred purposes.

Profaning
sacred
vestments,
etc.

Again, not everything, even though *blessed*, is with the same strictness withdrawn from secular uses. Thus, while it is certainly sinful (quite apart from scandal caused) to use for domestic purposes those of the sacerdotal vestments which are blessed, the same could not be said of the use of blessed candles or palms, still less of vases, candlesticks, carpets, seats, etc., which are not even blessed. Thus, although it might be more reverent to avoid using a blessed candle—say, for one's writing-table, piano, or bedchamber (except in sore need)—such use would not be sinful.

It is grievously sinful to treat sacred vessels or vestments with *grave indignity* or irreligious *mockery*, or to turn them to purely secular uses—*e.g.*, a worn-out chasuble—unless such sacred objects be first *entirely deprived of their sacred form*, so as to be reduced once more to mere material. Thus, a chalice might be melted down, and the

Profana-
tion of
sacred
vessels
and vest-
ments.

metal used for secular purposes; and an old chasuble, after being stripped of its braid, ornaments, etc., and cut up into separate pieces, might be used to make pincushions for a bazaar. But it would *not* be lawful to cut pieces out of an old chasuble or chalice veil, *according to need*, for repairing secular dresses, still less, *e.g.*, for making up theatrical costumes. For in this case the vestment has not been deprived of its sacred form. It must be remembered that, as a matter of Church legislation, those portions of vestments worn by sacred ministers (sub-deacon and upwards), that are ordered to be *blessed*, do not lose their blessing by the fact of being employed for secular purposes. Chalices, on the contrary, lose their consecration by the mere fact of being handed over to profane uses. In all these matters one has always to consider *the question of scandal* to others, even though there be no clear sin in the action itself.

Sacrilegious thefts. Property or money set aside for ecclesiastical purposes is not in itself a sacred thing, but the *right of the Church* to it is sacred, and hence sacrilege as well as theft is committed by misappropriating it or stealing it. This, of course, supposes that the goods in question are already in the dominion of the Church, and are not merely *due*.

Robbing money-boxes. Money deposited in *Church money-boxes* under lock and key should be considered as having passed within the dominion of the Church, and hence English law rightly regards theft of such moneys as sacrilege, which it is, indepen-

dently of the fact that the sacred thing is also taken *from a sacred place* of which it forms an ordinary adjunct, unlike a brooch or umbrella that has been dropped or left behind accidentally by a worshipper.¹

Money that has been put into a *collecting-plate* or bag at a collection during service is to be regarded as accepted by the Church, through her deputy, the collector, and hence is ecclesiastical property just as much as if it had actually passed into the keeping of the clergy. It is therefore *sacrilege* to steal it, grave or venial, according to the amount of the theft.

Then—as will be seen under the Eighth Commandment—a *deliberately systematic habit* of pilfering small amounts week by week morally connects these together into one sum, so that when a grave *total* has been reached a double mortal sin of theft *and of sacrilege* will have been committed, and, of course, the fact that sacrilege has been added to theft must be mentioned in Confession, though, of course, not necessarily to one of the priests of the Church concerned.²

Touching Sacred Things.—As some of my readers may be acting as sacristans to churches or chapels, or be engaged in sacristy or church work, it will

Accumulation of thefts.

Touching sacred vessels, etc.

¹ Theft of a thing found in church, but not belonging to it, is not a *mortal* sin of *sacrilege*. Whether there be a mortal sin of *theft*, or not, depends upon its value.

² Stealing what is *sacred* out of a *sacred place* is a twofold sacrilege—*i.e.*, a violation both of the *thing* and of the *place*.

be useful to explain what things they may touch. For clearness' sake let it be understood—

1. That by *touching* is meant *direct* contact, without the intervention of gloves or a clean cloth.
- What are 'sacred' things? 2. That by 'sacred' things are here meant (a) those objects which have been *consecrated* with holy chrism—not merely *blessed* with prayer and sprinkling of holy water—and which, besides, *immediately touch* the Blessed Sacrament; (b) objects which immediately touch the Blessed Sacrament, though they be not *consecrated*.

The following come under (a): *Chalice* and *paten* (or small plate used with chalice). Under (b): *Ciborium*, *pyx* (or box used for reserving the Sacred Host), *lunette* (or holder, deposited in the pyx, in which the Sacred Host used at Benediction is fixed); also those articles of altar linen used by the priest at Mass, called *corporals* and *palls*.

The monstrance, in which the Blessed Sacrament is placed and raised upon the altar-throne at solemn Benediction or Exposition, is not a *consecrated* vessel, nor, in its ordinary present construction, is it so designed as to touch the Blessed Sacrament.

Who may touch them?

Now let us consider the *rules of touch*.

Anyone may lawfully touch those altar or church appurtenances which do not come under either (a) or (b)—*i.e.*, which are neither *consecrated* nor are used in *direct* contact with the Blessed Sacrament. So teaches St. Alphonsus, a safe guide. Nevertheless, in particular cases of need such touching

will be lawful; e.g., the priest while saying Mass accidentally drops the corporal or the pall upon the floor. The ceremonial unseemliness of his stooping down to pick up the fallen article is reason enough for the server—even if not a cleric and not gloved—to pick it up reverently for him.

As regards the *purificator*, or linen cloth used by the priest with the chalice for cleansing purposes, and which is to be distinguished from the *lavabo* towel handed by the server to the priest after the latter has washed his fingers at the altar corner, the appointed use of this linen article does not bring it in direct contact with either of the sacred species, nor is it consecrated, of course.

Hence—on St. Alphonsus' rule—there appears no *wrong* in touching it even while in use. But, as a matter of counsel, it might be more reverent to abstain, except in a case of need.

To touch sacred vessels, etc., without ecclesiastical permission or need will not exceed a *venial* sacrilege, always supposing that it is not done *out of contempt*, in which case the sin would be mortal.

Guilt of unlawfully touching sacred things.

Sacristans, whether male or female, belonging to religious orders strictly so called, or to religious congregations not taking 'solemn' vows, have by *custom* the privilege of touching sacred vessels, etc.

Sacristans.

In the case of private oratories granted for the exclusive use of private families, someone will have to fulfil the duties of sacristan. No difficulty arises in the case of such a person (of

either sex), if gloves be used. For lay *men* have no greater license in this matter than lay women. Necessity will excuse immediate contact in their case, as in others. But leave is generally given for them to act in the same way as religious sacristans, who are not clerics, are allowed to do.

Washing
of altar
linen.

No one beneath the grade of sub-deacon may give the *first* of the ecclesiastical cleansings to soiled *corporals*, *palls*, or *purificators*. The greatest care should be taken lest any of the above articles of altar linen be sent to the laundry before first receiving the prescribed ecclesiastical washings.

Another point, having some connection with the present topic, is that no one except a deacon or priest should either insert the key into the tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament, nor extract the same—except in some urgent need, *e.g.*, to provide for safety.

Though I have been stating here what theologians of weight declare to be lawful in the present matter, for the comfort of scrupulous people, yet those of the laity are to be praised who, out of deeper reverence for sacred things, do not avail themselves of their liberty to the full.

Reverence
in church
work.

In general, all who are engaged in any sort of work connected with the sanctuary or church have need to beware lest ‘familiarity breed contempt.’ Particularly, if people be present in the church, they should guard against giving scandal by *constantly* omitting to genuflect when passing across a tabernacle in which the Blessed

Sacrament is reserved—although, if alone, the nature of their work, fatigue, or the limited time at their disposal for voluntary services, might justify some curtailment of the number of genuflexions. Cause should not be given for people to say what Pius IX. is reported to have remarked about a man whom he saw genuflecting in an irreverent way before the altar: ‘That man must be either an unbeliever or a *sacristan*!’

Personal Sacrilege.—This sin consists in doing violence to *persons* specially consecrated to religion; that is to say—

Personal
sacrilege.

1. All ecclesiastical persons whatever, whether priests or mere tonsured clerics.

2. Those consecrated to God by the vows of religious life.

3. It is also *personal* sacrilege to bring ecclesiastics before civil courts of justice in causes which the laws of the Catholic church—as nowadays enforced—reserve to ecclesiastical tribunals.

Hence, it is sacrilege to strike, to inflict serious indignities upon, sacred persons. With regard to striking, the injury need not be a serious physical one from the standpoint of the *Fifth Commandment*. But it must be something more deliberate than a trivial blow due to a momentary impulse of impatience or anger.

Any violation of the Sixth or Ninth Commandments, by outward act (or even by real desire) in relation to religious or those in sacred orders—besides being a sin of unchastity—is a *sacrilege* also, which must be distinctly confessed.

Not all
sins
against
sacred
persons
are sacri-
legious.

Other sins, at the expense of sacred persons, though *mortal*—e.g., calumny and detraction—are *not* sacrilege, since they do not affect their victims precisely as *consecrated* to God, but rather as ordinary individuals. Yet such faults as those just mentioned may become *graver* in their own kind on account of the greater harm they do when committed against priests and religious (see p. 199).

Personal
sins of
sacrilege.

It is obvious that sacred persons must *reverence their own dedication to God*; hence, anyone bound by a vow of chastity who violates the Sixth or Ninth Commandment commits an additional sin against *religion*.¹ Whether this further sin possesses the aggravated guilt of sacrilege will depend upon the degree of recognition by ecclesiastical law of their consecrated character.

Test of
their
gravity.

The *gravity* of the offence against the First Commandment will be proportionate to that against chastity—just as the gravity of *sacrilegious* theft depends upon the value of what is stolen (see p. 109).

Violation
of sacred
places.
Forms of
this sin.

Local Sacrilege, or Irreligious Profanation of Sacred Places.—This guilt will be incurred—(1) by the commission in a sacred place of any act which is specially repugnant to its purity and holiness, or (2) by using a sacred place for purposes not befitting its sanctity. The Church's

¹ The word *religion* here means the *virtue* of religion, or worship of God, and not the *religious state*. Hence, it is not necessary to be a religious in order to sin against religion—e.g., by violating a *private* vow.

right to exemption from any such employment of her sacred places is styled *local immunity*.

Under (1) the following offences would be sacrilegious, but only if committed within the *four walls and roof* of a place either simply *blessed*, or solemnly *consecrated* for public worship, or for the burial of the dead—to wit, the shedding of blood, or any *outward* offence against chastity, whether publicly noticed or not. For the purposes of prohibition (1), outer parts of the place in question—*e.g.*, the sacristy, vaults, staircases leading to the said places—are *not* included.

What is
a sacred
place?

The following would be offences under heading (2): *Violent disputes* and quarrelling such as cause great general disturbance—*e.g.*, Mrs. A and Miss B fighting over a particular sitting with loud altercation, abuse, screaming, and perhaps with an offensive use *à la bayonette* of umbrellas; *the holding of sales* after the manner of a public market, not merely a quiet sale of votive candles or pieties in some less conspicuous part of the church, although some priests may prefer to exclude even this, out of motives of greater edification; the holding of *secular meetings* with clamour and disturbance.

For the purpose of this *second* forbiddance, the sacredness of *place extends further*, and includes those outer parts specified under the previous heading, as also cemeteries separated from the church, convents of solemnly professed religious together with gardens and farms included within their precincts, hospitals and homes erected by

episcopal authority which have a chapel for the celebration of Mass attached.

With regard to other faults which are committed in a public church or burial-place not mentioned under (1), it is true that they possess a certain additional malice because committed in a place where offence of God is specially reprehensible; but this additional guilt will not be *grievous* unless, from quite exceptional causes, they should constitute really *great* irreverence.

No sacrilege 'of time.'

It must be observed that there is no such thing known to theology as a special sin such as we might term a 'sacrilege of *time*.' Thus, to sin, *e.g.*, on a Sunday, or on a Communion-day, although lending a certain aggravation to the offence, does not alter the nature of the sin for purposes of Confession; neither, of course, could it change a venial sin into a *mortal* one, nor make the latter *double*.

Respect for every-thing holy, the Eucharist especially.

To conclude: True Catholic spirit will show itself in *respect for the very smallest thing* connected with the worship of God, and above all with the Blessed Sacrament. For, in the Eucharist, Our Lord has gone to the lowest depths of gracious, loving condescension. He has delivered Himself once more 'into the hands of sinners,' that He may be ever by their side as a Friend and a Consoler, walking with them hand-in-hand through the troubled paths of life, until He shall bring them safely to the 'mountain of God.' He has *trusted* us with His entire Self. How careful we ought to be not to abuse that trust!

No. XII.

B. SINS AGAINST RELIGION BY DEFECT—

Continued.

3. SIMONY.

SIMONY is a word derived from *Simon*, the magician, who, seeing the marvels exhibited in those upon whom the Apostles had conferred the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands, wanted to buy this power. Peter replied: 'Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. . . . Do penance, therefore, from this wickedness,' etc. (Acts viii. 20-22). Origin of term.

The essence of this great sin of simony lies in *trafficking with spiritual things*—that is to say, making a contract by which *temporal* goods are to be given in exchange for *spiritual* ones. Where the danger of this sin occurs more frequently is in the matter of *ecclesiastical preferments* and in the stages preliminary to their reception. Let me pass on to what may be of more practical use to the general reader. In what Simony consists.

Where *fees* are given on the occasion of priestly or episcopal ministrations there is no simony. Payment in such cases is not made for the spiritual gift received, but for the support of the minister. (See Fourth Commandment, p. 203.) Ministerial fees.

The following points seem to be the only practical ones :

Blessed
objects
not to be
sold.

1. *The selling of pious objects already blessed*—e.g., if the owner of a Catholic Repository took in a large stock of rosaries, medals, etc., blessed by the Pope, and *then* sold them to individual purchasers. Of course, if he charged extra *on account of the blessing*, he would commit rank simony. Were he to charge only for the value of the material beads, he would not, indeed, be committing real simony, but the transaction would savour scandalously of that offence, and he is forbidden to enter into it.

A lawful
transac-
tion.

But there is another transaction which might appear identical with the one just condemned, whereas it is quite different, and affords no legitimate ground for scandal. Sometimes a religious Order or Congregation has been granted faculties by the Holy See for enriching rosaries with specially large Indulgences. People may, of course, buy unblessed rosaries and send them to be blessed by such privileged priests, and it is not simony, but *justice*, for the applicant to pay the double carriage. Or, again, those who are not particular as to the kind of rosary they use may write and ask such priests to send a number of rosaries already blessed for their own use, or for presents to others whom they wish to have the benefit of the said rich Indulgences. In this case, too, it is *justice* and not simony to pay for the value of the material beads as well as for the cost of carriage. For here, the beads are not really *sold in their blessed condition*, though perhaps they

may be *paid* for after being blessed. They are already *assigned* to the applicants before the blessing is given them. Simoniacal appearances will be prevented, on the side of the priests in question, by only blessing rosaries *as applications come in*, and not keeping them in stock *already blessed* for possible applicants.

2. Similarly, *Masses* may be promised *out of* Masses of gratitude. *gratitude* for contributions made towards some religious or charitable object. But if such an arrangement be *publicly announced* or *advertised*, care has always to be taken lest the way of explaining it smack of simony, by giving the impression of a business exchange.

3. Here is a kind of traffic in *Masses* expressly Unlawful traffic in Masses. forbidden by the Church: A sends B £10 as a stipend for *forty* *Masses* which B is to get said for him. Where B lives, the usual stipend happens to be 5s. So he sends the request for *Masses* to another country where the usual stipend is only 2s. 6d., and, after despatching £5 to the priest who is to say the *Masses*, he pockets the remaining £5!

On the other hand, a person does no wrong who, in sending his offering for some *Masses*, chooses a place where the stipend fixed by the Bishop of the diocese is smaller, in order to secure *a larger number of Masses*. Had B, above referred to, sent the whole £10 abroad in order that his friend A might have the benefit of twice as many *Masses*, he would have done no wrong, though he might have been doing a bad turn to his own clergy, especially if these were poor.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

No. XIII.

BLASPHEMY AND VAIN USE OF GOD'S NAME.

'Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.'

The praise
of God.

IT is part of a creature's duty to *praise God* by extolling His excellence and infinite perfections. The heavens tell the glory of God, as we are taught in the Scriptures ; but having no intelligence, they can do this only in a material way, by unconsciously witnessing to the excellences of their Maker, just as a painting exhibits the genius of the artist who conceived and produced it.

The same is true of all earthly creatures, rational man alone excepted. When, therefore, in the canticle *Benedicite* the psalmist calls upon every portion of irrational creation to 'praise the Lord,' it is man himself who is to be their rational spokesman and extol the perfections of Almighty God, as reflected in the works of His Divine hand.

Praise of God being man's duty, any form of speech *detracting* from the Divine excellence becomes sinful. Thus, the Second Commandment forbids all words *dishonouring* to God, and in so doing virtually commands us to praise and reverence His Holy Name.

Nor does the forbiddance contained in the present Commandment refer to words against

Almighty God alone. In due proportion it condemns all speech to the dishonour of anything *connected* with God—His Holy Mother, His Saints, His written Word, all sacred rites and objects, and any created thing, if considered precisely in its relation to Him.

Dishon-
ouring
God in His
creatures.

BLASPHEMY.

The gravest form of sin against this precept is *blasphemy*, or any *insulting* or *contemptuous* speech against God or the things of God—for instance, declaring in a time of trial that God is cruel, unjust, or unwise in the arrangements of His Providence.

Blas-
phemy.

Such blasphemies are exceptionally sinful because they are also *heretical*, as denying the teachings of faith about Divine perfections. But there is still blasphemy, though not heresy, in speaking *defiantly* or *rebelliously* against God. When, however, this is done under the *first shock of some sudden calamity*, it will often lack that full advertence and deliberation needed for a *mortal* sin. The mere fact of a person's being very sorry for so speaking immediately afterwards will be a fairly sure sign that the conditions for a grievous sin were wanting. *In itself*, however, blasphemy is always a *very grievous sin*.

Heretical
blas-
phemy.

Rebellion
under
trials,

Excep-
tional
guilt of
blas-
phemy.

Strictly speaking, blasphemy is a *sin of speech*; but evidently any outward sign or act of contumely or contempt is equivalent to speech. Thus, to fire an arrow into the heavens, as Julian the Apostate is narrated to have done, or to trample

Strict
sense of
term,

upon or to defile a crucifix out of contempt, would be grievous blasphemies in action.

Blasphemous thoughts.

But even contumelious *thoughts* of a *deliberate* kind, unspoken maledictions and cursings against God or things relating to Him, though not full-blown blasphemy in the technical sense, share its malice, and are *grievously* sinful. The awful crime of positive *hatred* of God—sometimes too plainly visible in bad Catholics, who persecute the Church, especially in Continental lands—is not blasphemy, indeed, but far more wicked than it, and a fertile source of blasphemies.

Express intention not necessary for blasphemy.

For committing blasphemy it is not necessary that a person should *expressly intend* to blaspheme, provided he *seriously* and *deliberately* utter words which are insulting to Almighty God. Thus, a man might use such expressions to vent his anger, or to frighten bystanders, and this would still be blasphemy. In the case of anger, however, the impulse of passion may be so violent and sudden as not to give the speaker time to realize the meaning of his words.

Blasphemous jokes.

Jokes about God, or what is connected with Him, will also be blasphemous when calculated to produce in the hearer's mind an impression of dishonour and insult to what is sacred. This would occur in *contemptuous*, *sneering* jokes. But if the unseemly jest be free from contempt, there will be *venial* sin only—a sin of *irreverence*, not of blasphemy. *Ridicule of priests and sacred persons* of a really insulting kind, and directed towards them in their capacity as sacred persons,

Ridicule of sacred persons and things.

constitutes blasphemy, because here they are attacked *in their connection* with God. On the other hand, jokes, even if not quite good-natured, but still about their defects as men, whether real or imaginary, will be at most *venial* irreverences. The real test in such matters is supplied us in the rule given by St. Thomas: 'In sinful words what has chiefly to be noticed is the spirit' (disposition of mind) 'in which they are uttered.'

Such jokes differ, again, from those suggested by some unusual occurrence or hitch in sacred ceremonies, or by some peculiar church arrangement. Here there will seldom be ridicule of sacred things themselves, but rather of what improperly belongs to them, or of what, in the joker's eyes, appears incongruous in a place of worship, and in bad taste. A little care, however, is needed lest the joke pass from the things to the sacred *persons* responsible for them, and exceed what is lawful.

In general, the *practice* of humorously criticising things associated with Divine worship is at all events highly *undesirable*. It fosters in oneself and in others a spirit of *curious observation* in church, thus promoting distractions at the expense of a reverent spirit of prayer and worship. There is no cheaper form of humour than this. The passage from the sublime to the ridiculous is proverbially easy; the dullest wit can achieve it. Other considerations on the subject of *gossip about priests* may be found under the Fourth Commandment (p. 199).

Joking
about
church
to be
avoided.

Though an *intention to blaspheme* is not essential

Doubtful
profani-
ties.

for real blasphemy, when the words deliberately uttered are of a blasphemous character, yet the presence or absence of intention helps to decide the guilt of *doubtful* expressions. Again—blasphemy apart—certain profane speeches may cause *grave* scandal, owing to the general abhorrence in which they are held by God-fearing people. Above all, when employed by persons dedicated to God's service—*e.g.*, priests, religious, etc.—they easily bring religion into contempt.

Vain use
of sacred
names.

In every tongue used by Christians, common expressions are to be found which introduce the name of God, of the Saints, of sacred things, etc. Thus, in former centuries in England there was the expression 'God's wounds!' — afterwards corrupted into 'Zounds!' which is now practically obsolete. This was not a blasphemy, saving evil intention, but an irreverent allusion to Our Lord's Sacred Wounds. In its corrupted form it soon ceased to convey any religious idea at all. So, too, nowadays we hear 'Good God!' 'O Christ!' and the like, which ordinarily are at most venial sins of irreverence, because a *vain use* of sacred names. But if used with some respect and piety, or as an exclamation in a fright, in sudden trial, or in horror of something terrible or wicked, they are lawful, and, indeed, may even be a kind of prayer. Here again St. Thomas's rule, lately quoted, has its application. The exclamation 'Good heavens!' appears to have little or no religious significance amongst us.

IMPRECATION OR MALEDICTION.

This consists in *invoking evil* upon persons or things. Imprecations.

It is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the horrible sin of curses uttered against Almighty God. We will pass on to *imprecations upon God's creatures*, rational or irrational. There is blasphemy in this also, but only when creatures are expressly considered *as the works of God*, which would seldom occur. When viewed merely in themselves, it is venially sinful to curse them, for such curses are idle and useless.

But what of those expressions in common use which, in form at least, suggest imprecation, such as people give vent to in impatience or anger upon some unpleasant occurrence?

For example: A young man, while on his way to some genteel social gathering, tears his best frock-coat, or at play misses the critical stroke, or burns his nail badly in lighting his pipe, and vehemently exclaims, 'D——n it!' A weary London postman, dragging himself along upon his last round, on opening the final pillar-post, finds it choked to the brim with a thousand circulars, and pushing back his peaked cap to the back of his head, as he stands aghast, gives vent to his despair in—'Well, I'm d——d!' A imperiously demands an apology of B, who replies, 'Go and be d——d!'

Young men not uncommonly indulge a taste for 'devilled' language. They constantly bring in

Satan and his abode in order to enforce their statements; they give uncomplimentary and wholly ineffectual orders to their friends to 'go to' one or the other of the above-named.

Its moral
signifi-
cance.

Bad language of this description is popularly called 'swearing,' but this is a misnomer. Nor are such speeches really maledictions or imprecations. Their guilt will very seldom exceed that of the pride, impatience, anger, or uncharitableness, which may happen to prompt them. At the same time, in their stronger forms as applied to *persons*, they may cause some scandal to bystanders; and if they be used in anger, there is a possibility of bad wishes to the individual addressed which may differ little from the one suggested by the literal meaning of the words used. The latter would at least be *contumelious* expressions.

Bad
language
religiously
objection-
able.

In spite of these considerations, *grievous* sin will rarely be committed in the above ways.

I do not mean to say, however, that such strong language may be excused, even from the standpoint of the virtue of *religion*. It is certainly unbecoming in the mouths of Christian gentlemen, and not merely what is called 'bad form'—that 'unforgiven sin' of society. Men virtually admit this much by often apologizing for any slip in this matter which they chance to make before priests or religious persons generally, and not only when they accidentally blurt out a profane word before ladies. For example, 'Would you, sir, kindly retire a short distance for a while?' politely

Anecdote.

requested a naval officer of the late Father Stephen Perry, S.J., when, during his last astronomical expedition, the sailors under the officer's command failed to drag up the cases of instruments to the point of observation with satisfactory speed. History does not record what the lieutenant said when relieved of the Father's reverend presence, but, somehow, the cases were hauled up the hill in double-quick time.

As a fitting conclusion to the present subject, Devotion
to the
Holy
Name. attention may be called to the devout and eminently Catholic practice of outwardly honouring the Holy Name of Jesus. It is sad to notice at times a falling off in the pious custom of bowing the head when pronouncing that Name 'which is above every other name.' We are reminded of this laudable observance by the Church rubric which enjoins an inclination of the head during the recital of the words, 'Blessed be the *Name of the Lord*, from henceforth, now, and for ever,' the second verse of the *Laudate pueri* (Ps. cxii.), usually sung in Vespers.

The Holy Name, assumed by Our Blessed Lord at His Incarnation, and spoken by the angel to Mary 'before He was conceived in the womb,' sums up the whole personality of the Word made flesh. It embodies the manifold perfections and the adorable attractiveness of that Most Sacred Humanity. Fidelity to the outward act of worship here referred to will serve to eradicate in us all tendency to a vain use of that Holy Name, and at the same time afford the Sacred Heart of its

Bearer some little reparation for its too common profanation through the irreverence and blasphemy of others.

Reason-
able devo-
tion.

But, of course, reverence does not demand that we should bow at every single mention of the Holy Name when it frequently recurs—*e.g.*, during the recital of the rosary, where it appears in each ‘Hail Mary,’ or in the Litany of the Holy Name. This would exceed the demands of that ‘reasonable service’ mentioned by St. Paul. Not that we can really show too much honour to Our Lord. In the same way, it would not exceed His deserts were we to spend the whole day and night prostrate on our faces before the Blessed Sacrament of His Real Presence. But we are mortal men, hampered by many limitations, and Our Lord well knows it, and, moreover, is Himself intensely human. Therefore He does not make exorbitant demands upon our physical or moral powers as human beings. Over-strict views in these or other points of outward reverence would seem to spring from insufficiently realizing the truth of Our Lord’s Humanity, and the depth of His condescension in coming down to our own level by means of His Incarnation.

No. XIV.

OATHS.

THE taking of oaths is lawful. Thus, we have in the Old Testament, 'Thou shalt swear, As the Lord liveth, in truth, and in judgment, and in justice,' a text which also supplies us with the three conditions for swearing lawfully.¹ Moreover, the Old Testament in several passages forbids *false* oaths, thus implying that *some* oaths are lawful. Hence, Our Lord could not have meant to contradict these utterances of the Holy Spirit by forbidding *all* oaths, as some sectaries maintain He did, when He said: 'But I say unto you swear not at all . . . but let your speech be yea, yea; no, no.'² In this place Christ only confirms the teaching of the Old Law by forbidding *rash* and *unnecessary* oaths, such as men so often use in daily conversation.

An oath is *an act of Divine worship (latreia)*, by which a man calls upon Infinite Truth to bear witness to the truth of what he is saying. The object of his doing this is, obviously, to convince others of the truth of his assertion. He might be considered capable of lying ordinarily, but he will be held less likely to commit the grave sin of making God a party to his falsehood. Hence the value of an oath and its necessity in matters of

Oaths
lawful
according
to Bible.

Nature
and pur-
pose of an
oath.

¹ Jer. iv. 2.

² St. Matt. v. 33-37.

great moment, such as the administration of justice, or on assuming some public office of exceptional importance.

Forms of
oath.

The *thing sworn to* in an oath may be some *present* fact, or *past* occurrence, or, again, something *future*.

Thus, we have (a) an oath of *assertion*—*e.g.*, that I am now in possession of certain money, or (b) that the other night I locked up the safe before leaving my employer's place of business; or, (c) a *promissory* oath, or sworn promise—*e.g.*, that I will make due reparation for some injury which I have caused. A sworn promise to perform an act of virtue much resembles a vow, of which more later on. But it may differ from a vow, inasmuch as the thing sworn to may not be *more* virtuous than its opposite—*e.g.*, a sworn promise that I will seek for a wife.

Three
conditions
for a law-
ful oath.

As the text from the prophet Jeremias has already shown us, *three conditions* are needed to justify an oath.

1. I must swear *with judgment*; that is to say, there must be *good cause* for swearing at all. *Rash* and *unnecessary oaths* are sinful, being a vain and idle use of God's Name or of the sacred object sworn by—*e.g.*, swearing that I enjoyed my dinner immensely, or that I will smoke a cigar. But such oaths are *venial* sins, not *mortal*, always supposing that neither of the next two conditions are violated.

2. What I swear to must be *true*—at the time of swearing.

3. My oath must be taken 'in justice'; *i.e.*, it must not injure anyone, or involve the commission of sin—*e.g.*, an oath confirming a calumny, such as swearing that someone is a drunkard when he is not; or swearing never to go to Mass or to Confession any more; or swearing never to forgive an offending son or daughter.

For a *valid* oath one must have the *intention of swearing*. A feigned oath is *venially* sinful, since it is simply a vain use of God's Name, and involves a simple untruth. Yet it would be *grievously* sinful to feign an oath to another's injury, or with injury to the public good—*e.g.*, a fictitious oath taken in the witness-box of a court of justice. For grave reasons the State has always a right to demand a genuine oath.

In swearing to a point of fact, the person *need not have infallible certainty* of its truth; but he must have truly solid reasons for believing it such as approach closely to *moral* certainty. He may swear 'to the best of his knowledge,' as the phrase runs.

The guilt of *perjury*, if due to deliberate lack of *truth*, is always a *grievous* sin, because the Infinite Truth of God suffers grave dishonour thereby. Yet, *e.g.*, a nervous witness at a trial, if muddled by severe 'bullying' in cross-examination, will often be entirely guiltless in swearing without truth or sufficient certainty. In a *promissory* oath *mortal* sin is committed if the person does not *at the time* really intend to keep it, for this induces defect of *truth*. But if—though sincere at the

Intention
needed for
a valid
oath.

Degree of
certainty
needed on
swearer's
part.

Perjury
and its
guilt.

Breach of
promissory
oaths.

time—he *afterwards* change his mind, he sins *venially* against the virtue of *fidelity* (to promises), and he further sins *venially* or *mortally* according to the *importance* of the thing promised, or according to the *extent* to which he fails in fulfilling it. Here the oath is not against *truth*, because sincere at the time of taking.

It is sinful for me to promise upon oath what I see, at the time, there is no real probability of my being able to fulfil. If, *after* taking the oath, its fulfilment becomes impossible, or the person in whose favour I swore surrenders his right, or that which I promised interferes with the rights of others, the oath ceases to bind me.

Oaths to
do wrong

This leads us to the subject of promissory oaths *to do what is unlawful*. Such oaths do not bind—nay, it is the *duty of violating* them that is binding. Thus, oaths to obey blindly all orders given to me, *no matter what their nature*—even orders to assassinate—are utterly immoral and worthless. So is an unlimited oath to keep secret everything—*no matter what*—that transpires in a private assembly or corporation, a form of oath commonly attributed to Freemasons.¹ N.B.: The vow of obedience which binds religious is taken on the most express understanding that it does not (as, indeed, it *could* not) bind if the command be clearly sinful.

Secret
oaths.

Vow of
obedience
lawful.

The priest, who is bound to unlimited secrecy

¹ If this be true, and the writer has seen perfectly reliable evidence of the fact in the case of some Masonic 'lodges,' then Freemasonry is immoral quite apart from its absolute condemnation by the Holy See.

—even at the risk of life and honour—concerning whatever is confessed to him in the Sacrament of Penance, takes no oath to this effect. His strict obligation in this point springs from the very nature of the Sacrament itself as instituted by the *Divine* authority of Christ. No human authority, therefore, has any right to violate this secret.

The seal of
confes-
sion.

Now to say something about those forms of *bad language* which resemble oaths. It must be borne in mind that God may be invoked either in person or as represented by His Saints, and by sacred persons and things, or even by inanimate objects which are specially connected with the idea of God—*e.g.*, the expression, ‘By Heaven!’ But saving an *intention* of invoking God, this is not a real oath; it is at most an irreverent use of God’s name—a *venial* sin—and possibly a light offence of scandal as well. The phrases ‘God knows,’ ‘God is my witness,’ ‘Speaking in God’s sight,’ or ‘Before God,’ these will be oaths or not according to the intention of the speaker and the circumstances in which they are uttered. But they are commonly no more than ways of adding weight and solemnity to statements, of conveying to others the depth of one’s sincerity and conviction, and are lawful when there is some cause. Without cause, they will be venially irreverent. The expressions ‘I swear,’ ‘Upon my soul,’ ‘Upon my conscience,’ and the like, used in ordinary conversation, are no more than strong forms of affirmation, though *capable* of serving as oaths.

‘Swear-
ing’
words.

The expression 'By God'—with which too many interlard their most ordinary expressions of opinion—has a far more serious sound ; but, from lack of *intention*, would often be reducible to a vain and irreverent use of the Divine Name, as far as the *Second* Commandment is concerned. But this particular form of irreverence commonly causes *serious scandal* to right-minded hearers, and so might easily become a grievous sin against the Fifth Commandment.

The phrase 'Upon my honour' is no oath at all unless attended by some outward act signifying an oath, such as touching the Gospels or touching the crucifix. That versatile part of speech, the Saxon shorter equivalent of *sanguinary*—which appears, now as an adjective, now as an adverb, in every other sentence uttered by certain of the lower classes—may be regarded as a simple piece of coarse vulgarity, devoid of any religious meaning, even if it be a modern corruption for 'By Our Lady' of olden times.

No. XV.

VOWS.

A vow is another act of Divine worship, but an *entirely optional* one. It consists in promising God *with full deliberation* to do a *better thing*; that is to say, something *more* virtuous than its opposite—*e.g.*, a vow of celibacy (*i.e.*, not to enter upon the state of matrimony). For celibacy, as Divine revelation teaches us, is a more perfect condition than its opposite, marriage.¹ (There are, of course, exceptional circumstances in which marriage would be more virtuous, and hence might be made the subject of a vow.)

What is a
vow?

I do not mean that one cannot vow a thing that is already commanded under pain of sin. For instance, *a vow of chastity* includes the keeping of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, which are already universally binding—though it *further* includes the vow of virginity and also of celibacy, neither of which are otherwise obligatory.

The taking of a vow lends *additional* virtue to the performance of the thing vowed. For it binds the soul to God by a *fresh tie*, that of *religion*, and

Excel-
lence of
vows.

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 7, 8, 27, 37, 38, 40. The mere fact of not being married, or of resolving to remain single—even out of virtue—does not constitute the *state* of celibacy unless a vow be added—freedom to marry at any time still being reserved.

so a person acting under a vow exercises a fresh virtue of the highest excellence. Thus, if I vowed not to steal, my respect for other people's goods would have *extra* merit before God—the merit of the virtue of *religion*—as well as of *justice*.

Obliga-
tion of
vows.

The person who takes a vow of *greater perfection*—*i.e.*, a vow to do what is otherwise not obligatory—imposes upon himself a new law which God has abstained from imposing. In other words, he binds himself to act according to *God's good pleasure* in some matter, not being content merely to obey His positive commands. But once he has vowed, he commits sin by omitting the thing promised, but only a *single* sin—*i.e.*, against religion—not a two-fold one, as in the case of a breach of the vow of chastity.

Common
objection
to above.

It is sometimes urged against the spiritual value of vows that it is surely more virtuous to do a thing freely than to do it under the moral pressure exerted by a vow. This is a sophism. For (1) the vow *itself* is a free act (or it would be *null and void*) ; (2) it adds to the act performed under it the additional merit of an act of worship (*latreia*) ; (3) it shows a greater *intensity* of virtue, because the person vowing makes over to Almighty God the *moral* freedom he originally possessed to omit what he promises.

Illustra-
tion.

The comparison by which spiritual writers illustrate this point may help to make it clearer. The difference between acts of virtue performed without a vow and with it is like that which exists between occasionally making a present of the *fruit*

of some tree, at will, and handing over once for all the possession of the tree itself.

Let us now discuss more carefully the conditions for a true vow.

1. It must be made *deliberately* and *with absolute freedom*. There must be a clear understanding that the guilt of a *special* sin will be incurred by violating it; otherwise no more than a *resolution* or a *promise* has been made. The form 'I promise' does not of itself constitute a vow properly so called.

Conditions for true vow.
1. Deliberate and free.

A girl in her teens, while praying before the Blessed Sacrament, or a younger girl making her first Communion, in a sudden access of fervour 'promises Our Lord,' as she would express it, to become a nun. Here, ordinarily, there would be *no real vow*; it was not made with proper thought and deliberation, but on the spur of the moment, under an impulse of fervour.

So, too, a vow made under the influence of some sudden fright, under considerable pressure of others, or terrifying threats of spiritual loss, would lack the necessary freedom and deliberation. Of course, a fear of losing one's soul in the world may be a perfectly right motive for taking vows, but this should not be done while under the first impression, nor without subsequent calm and mature deliberation and taking of advice.

In this connection one would say: 'N.B.—Never take vows without *first* consulting some experienced spiritual guide. Vows are awkward things to trifle with.' This rule is particularly

Caution against rash vows!

important for emotional characters, and—very generally—for the devout sex. It applies most especially to vows of *chastity*, virginity, celibacy (*i.e.*, not to marry), and a vow to become a religious.¹

2. Not beyond one's strength.

2. The thing vowed must be *possible*—that is, *physically* and *morally* well within the strength of the person vowing.

Examples of contrary.

To vow to live one's life on bread and water would be no vow. With most, a vow to perform *daily very severe* bodily austerities would be also invalid. A vow to avoid *all* venial sins is null and void, on account of the moral *impossibility* (declared by the Council of Trent) of doing this without a *special privilege*, such as Our Lady had. A vow to avoid all mortal sins would be *valid*, but frequently most rash; and one to avoid a *particular form* of venial sin, generally speaking, still more rash, though Saints and very saintly persons have been known to go even further, by virtue of exceptional inspirations and proportionate graces. A good sample of a morally impossible vow to avoid a particular venial sin would be one against distractions in prayer.

3. The thing promised must be better.

3. The *thing promised* must be *better than its opposite*. Thus, a vow to get married would usually be no vow, because in itself celibacy is better, as St. Paul teaches. Any vow at variance with the duties we owe to others is invalid, it being more virtuous to fulfil our obligations. To marry A, who is a good Catholic, instead of B, who is likely to obstruct the practice of religion or good morals, would be valid material for a vow. A

¹ See p. 408, Appendix IV.

teacher who vowed to spend all her spare time in church, to the detriment of preparation for lessons, would be promising what is not better than its opposite.

To settle the gravity of the obligation incurred by taking a vow, the first thing to look to is the *intention of the vow-taker*, interpreted reasonably. Obligation of vows.

We saw just now that a vow was a *self-imposed* law; consequently its obligation depends chiefly *upon the mind of the person taking it*, and in case of doubt a reasonable construction must be put upon his intention. Depends chiefly upon the intention of vow-taker.

In taking a vow, I must mean that any breach of it shall render me guilty of a *new and special sin*, and it depends upon myself to settle whether that guilt shall be mortal or venial. If, after vowing, doubt should arise as to my intention in this respect, I may decide in the more lenient sense. I was *free* previous to the vow, and my freedom is only renounced by vowing to the *degree* in which I *clearly* intended to renounce it.

To clear up my doubt, I may consider what could *reasonably* have been my intention at the time of vowing. For instance, had I vowed a very small thing—*e.g.*, to put sixpence into the poor-box—it would not be reasonable to suppose that I had meant to bind myself to such a trifle under pain of *mortal* sin; indeed, a vow of this nature would be null and void because *unreasonable*. But a vow to perform something *considerable* under slight (venial) sin is reasonable (not to say more prudent), and therefore holds good.

Nevertheless, if the thing vowed be considerable—or ‘grave,’ as it is called, and yet, when vowing, I *gave no thought* to the question of guilt that would attend my breach of the vow, then my intention must be held to have corresponded with the *gravity* of my promise. Thus, a vow, *e.g.*, to hear a Mass—an act commanded by the Church on certain days under pain of *mortal* sin—or to recite the rosary daily, must, in the absence of any clue to a contrary intention in the taking, be considered binding under *grave* sin; and a vow, *e.g.*, to say one *Salve Regina*, as binding under *venial* sin only—the thing vowed being so slight.

How does the obligation of a vow cease?

When
does a
vow cease
to bind?
1. When
rendered
impos-
sible.

1. By its *becoming impossible*, and as long as it remains so; *e.g.*, a vow to give a large alms—the intending donor falling afterwards into great poverty. Sometimes the thing promised is divisible: then I am bound to that part which still remains possible. *E.g.*, I vow to build a church; but my means become smaller, and I can only build the nave.

2. When
no longer
virtuous.

2. By its *ceasing to be virtuous*—*e.g.*, if, after vowing to become a religious, my parents fall into great poverty so as to need support from me.

3. When
condition
of vow is
not veri-
fied.

3. *Conditional* vows cease to bind if the condition is not fulfilled—*e.g.*, I vow to give a chalice to the church if my sick child recovers completely, and it remains an invalid.

VOWS OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

Though I am not writing for religious, it may be useful to explain briefly the nature of *religious vows*. The religious vows.

The object of religious life is *to serve God more perfectly*, to keep the counsels of perfection as well as the Commandments; or, let us say, to imitate our Model, Jesus Christ, in a more perfect manner than is possible in the world. For this purpose it is necessary to remove those obstacles commonly met with in the world, which hinder, or render very difficult, this closer imitation of Christ. Purpose of religious life.
Means used.

These obstacles spring from three sources: the love of riches, the allurements of the flesh, and love of honour and independence.

The three vows of religion are: poverty, chastity, and obedience. By poverty, riches, with their dangers and cares, are abandoned; by chastity, sensual concupiscence is restrained, even in matters otherwise lawful; and by obedience, the will is subjected to the guidance of lawfully constituted superiors, who, however, are limited in their demands upon the obedience of subjects—first, by the laws of God and of the Church, and secondly by the nature of the rules and constitutions, which have been ecclesiastically examined and approved for a given religious body.

These three vows—taken after a long period of trial and reflection—by binding the religious *permanently*, make his condition *stable* and lasting, Meaning of the religious 'state.'

and so constitute him in a *state* of religion—in the same sort of way that Christian marriage places people in a settled state of life.

Essence of
all religi-
ous life.

The three vows, together with some sort of regular observance and discipline, constitute the *essence* of religious life, which is also termed the 'state of perfection.' Not because, by merely taking the vows, the religious becomes at once perfect, but because by their means and observance the religious is *placed in a condition* in which it is comparatively easy to become perfect. For, as we have seen, the chief obstacles to perfection are removed by the vows.

Acci-
dental dif-
ferences
amongst
Orders.

In all religious Orders and Congregations these three vows are taken, though not always with *equal* permanency. But the regular observance, as set forth in rules and constitutions, will differ, because the particular aim and purpose of religious bodies, as approved by the Church, varies. Also the application of the vows of poverty and obedience (not of chastity) may vary somewhat, for the same reason.

This much will suffice for the general reader, for it is not proposed to give here a full account of the religious state. Some further information, mainly concerning contemplative Orders, may be found in an article entitled 'Why Don't they *Do Something?*' (*English Messenger of the Sacred Heart* for August, 1902).

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

No. XVI.

OBSERVANCE OF THE SUNDAY.

'Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.'

I. HOLY MASS.

IN the two preceding Commandments we have reviewed various kinds of religious acts—many ways in which God may be worshipped. But so far we have not seen any times or occasions fixed for their exercise.

The Third Commandment comes in to bring us to business by fixing one day in every seven for the special service of God. This does not imply that our praise and adoration is to be *confined* to one day in the week only. True religion is not a 'Sunday affair'; it pervades the whole week and exerts its influence upon every act of our lives. The idea that we must give one day to God, but may give the other six to the devil, the world, and the flesh—although, perhaps, prevalent in some minds—falls sadly short of the Christian ideal. So when preachers, by way of urging people to go to church on Sundays, say to them, 'You ought, surely, not to grudge giving *one* day in the week to God's service,' they merely mean that, if their

Sunday fixed for special service of God. An error corrected.

hearers are so niggardly as to decline to do more, at least they should fulfil their strict Sunday duty.

Institu-
tion of the
Sabbath-
day.

Almighty God appointed one day in every seven for rest and for special worship, in order to commemorate His having rested on the seventh day, after creating the world in six.¹ The particular day He chose was called 'Sabbath,' our *Saturday*. We have the corresponding Latin word *Sabbatum*, and in Spanish *Sabado*. Under the Christian dispensation, as all know, the day of rest comes a day later—that is to say, on 'the first day of the week,' the Latin *Dies Dominica*, or 'Lord's Day,' our *Sunday*, a change made in honour of the day upon which Christ, our Pasch, rose from the dead.

Sabbath
duties
trans-
ferred to
Christian
Sunday
by the
Church.
Bible
testimony
not suffi-
cient.

But we only know this with certainty *from the traditional practice of the Church*, handed down through the Christian ages from Apostolic times. For the Bible, in its New or Christian Testament, affords no clear and certain proof that the stringent obligations attached by the Decalogue to the Sabbath have been authoritatively transferred to our Sunday. We do, it is true, learn from St. Paul's Epistles that the Christians under his guidance reserved the collecting of alms in behalf of their poorer brethren in Jerusalem for the 'first day in the week,' which certainly means Sunday; and from this it may be fairly *inferred* that the reason for choosing that day for the collections was on account of its being the day of rest and special

¹ Exod. xx. 11. There is no need to discuss here the real duration of these *days* of creation.

worship.¹ But this inference would be too slight a ground upon which to found a grave obligation for Christians in all time and in all places. It is in the *tradition* of the Christian Church that we find definite *authority* for applying the prescriptions of the Third Commandment to our Sunday.

Hence, those of our countrymen who claim to guide themselves by 'the Bible *only*,' and who reject ecclesiastical *tradition* unless backed by unmistakable Biblical testimonies, should by rights subscribe their names to that somewhat obscure sect known as 'Sabbatarians,' who, as Bible Christians, more logically retain the old day of rest, and occasionally get into trouble with the police when caught employing labour on Sundays.

Moreover, the Bible Protestant has no 'warranty in Scripture' for convicting of sin those who, to his way of thinking, profane the sacredness of *Sunday*. 'Papist Sabbath-breakers.'

The duties imposed upon us by the Third Commandment are twofold: (1) the *positive* obligation of *attending Mass*; (2) the *negative* one of not engaging in needless *servile work*. Two Sunday duties.

Why is it that the Church has fixed upon attendance at *Holy Mass*—rather than at some other public religious ceremony—as essential for Sunday observance? Why Mass is enjoined.

For, an ill-informed Catholic might perhaps argue: 'I may just as well attend an evening service instead of Mass in the morning, because I find this arrangement more convenient.' Again, No other service can be substituted.

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

a non-Catholic master or mistress—finding it a bit troublesome that their Catholic servants should make a point (as *good* Catholics ought to do) of going to Mass—may reason with them thus: ‘Why can’t you go to church in the afternoon or evening? Why all this fuss and upset about Mass in the morning? Surely God can be worshipped at one hour of the day as well as at another?’ The flaw in such reasoning becomes plain when we consider *the special, the unique character of Mass*. For it stands apart from and above every other form of religious ‘service.’

Sacrifice
of the
Mass a
unique act
of Divine
worship.

The Catholic Faith teaches that the Mass is a *Sacrifice*—the august Sacrifice of the Christian Law. That it was instituted by Christ Himself at His Last Supper. That in It the self-same Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, becomes really, substantially, literally present under the appearance of bread and wine, after the words of consecration have been uttered over these by the ministering priest. That in this ‘clean oblation’ of His Body and Blood—offered throughout the Catholic Church—our Saviour continues to work out the effects of His Passion and Death, ever presenting in the sight of His Father those infinite merits of His *acquired once and for all* on Calvary, and applying their fruits to the souls of men for their various needs. Mass is, so to say, the ‘executive’ of the Cross, and in this sense a continuation of *one and the same* Sacrifice.

The Mass, then, is a true Sacrifice. By sacrifice

an acknowledgment is made to God of His supreme and absolute right over His creatures and all they have. Hence this act is reserved for rendering to God alone. It is the distinctive act of *Divine* worship. Prayer and praise are not. For though we pray to God, we are also allowed and urged to pray to the Saints. But sacrifice in its strictest sense cannot be offered to any creature however holy. That would be idolatry. Christians, by taking part in the Mass, perform the *highest act of Divine worship of which men are capable*. So it is only natural that, on the day specially set apart for the worship of God, the Church should require our attendance at this solemn rite in preference to every other.

Mass the only distinctive worship of God.

Holy Mass is the sacrificial prayer which the Sacred Heart of our Eldest Brother pours out to the Father, in the name of those whom He has made by grace His adopted brothers and sisters—that is to say, ourselves. It is the pleading of the Man who is also God, and therefore must as an act of worship infinitely surpass in value any form of public devotions or religious service whatever.

Mass the worship of Our Lord as Man.

Looked at in this light, Holy Mass stands out before us as an event of unrivalled solemnity and supremest importance. No event of earth, though the fate of empires or thrones depend upon it, deserves comparison with these Sacred Mysteries. So great is this Act of Jesus Christ in which we share by assisting at It, so immense and even infinite the glory It gives to God, so priceless the spiritual and temporal blessings flowing from It to

The greatness of Holy Mass.

men, that we cannot wonder at the guilt of mortal sin being incurred by the careless and slothful absentee, who neglects to give this glory to God, and shows his indifference, not to say contempt, towards such Divine benefits.

Causes excusing from Attendance at Mass.—The next point we will consider is *what causes excuse us from hearing Mass.*

A difference
among
precepts.

As theology teaches, some acts are forbidden because they are sinful: others are sinful only because forbidden. Thus, consequently, amongst things commanded us there are some from which *no cause can ever excuse*—things which are in themselves and of their own nature always obligatory, and the violation of which is always and in all circumstances wrong. For example, the duty of speaking the truth—of honesty in our dealings. Nothing can ever excuse us from such obligations as these. The Pope himself could not give us leave to lie or to steal. We are forbidden to lie, etc., because it is wrong—apart from any express forbiddance. Whereas it is wrong to miss Mass only because of the commandment to hear it, and of our duty to obey that commandment.

Com-
mands do
not always
bind.

But commands in matters of discipline or religious observance—which rank among what are called ‘positive’ laws—do not bind us in every conceivable circumstance, nor in spite of every difficulty. They are given in a *reasonable way*, and make allowance for obstacles which would render obedience to them too heavy a burden, and sometimes even an impossibility, to human nature.

For our Mother, the Church, is gentle and considerate. Hence, when difficulties of a *serious* nature stand in the way, the law is no longer enforced, nor is sin committed by not fulfilling it.

In this connection, however, we must bear in mind that all laws of the kind referred to do not stand *on the same level* of importance. Some are far more weighty than others, and therefore demand a weightier reason for exemption from them. Thus, for instance, the law of hearing Mass and that of the 'Easter duties' both need a really grave cause for exemption; yet a reason grave enough to excuse from Mass might be insufficient to exempt a man from making his Easter duties.

Different
urgency of
different
laws.

Causes excusing from attendance at Mass may be of various kinds: for example, walking-distance from church — illness — bad health, coupled, perhaps, with distance or bad weather—expense—sacrifice of considerable gain—some call of duty connected with a person's position or occupation in life, as in the case of servants or nurses (whether of small children or of the sick). With regard to *distance* from church, weighty theological authorities hold that a *walk* of three miles (each way, of course), *or*, an hour and a quarter's walking, and even something less, in bad weather, excuses all persons indiscriminately. Here, the whole six miles is supposed averagely to take the above length of time, the limit of strict duty being given in its time-equivalent, for the benefit of a person whose *bonâ fide* speed falls below the said average. It is impossible to discuss the various

Various
excusing
causes.

Distance
from
church.

causes of exemption in all their details. Besides, to lay down absolutely general rules for settling doubts of conscience in the present subject would be misleading; for so much depends upon the particular circumstances of each individual case, and these will vary indefinitely.

In diffi-
culty or
doubt.

Where doubt exists about the *sufficiency* of an excuse, the counsel of a priest should, if possible, be sought, or the practice of well-instructed and worthy Catholics may be followed. Those *subject to authority* may, as a general rule, safely abide by the decision of their superiors—*e.g.*, young people under age.

Servants
and Sun-
day Mass.

Servants, if constantly hindered from hearing Mass, are strongly urged to seek some other situation more favourable to the practice of their faith; but they are not bound to give notice at once, at the risk of serious loss to be suffered through remaining out of situation. Here it should be noticed that, although servants rightly claim an opportunity for attending Mass, masters and mistresses are not bound to supply the opportunity *at the precise hour preferred* by their servants, if the time fixed for them be a fairly reasonable one. I am here supposing that there is more than one Mass to be had.

Only
ordinary
means to
secure
Mass are
binding.

One rule may be laid down which will help to clear up some doubts of conscience—*viz.*, that no one is obliged to take measures of an exceptional kind, or, as the phrase goes, ‘extraordinary means,’ in order to comply with laws like the present. For example, a journey by rail—even supposing

the expense to be no consideration. It is enough to employ *ordinary* means.

So far I have tried to trace the limits of *strict duty*, and to explain as far as possible what a Catholic is absolutely *bound* to do. But I should be most unwilling to encourage my readers to steer their religious course by the principle of doing for God and for their souls as little as they can possibly help, and, so to say, weighing out their service of God by the grain. On the contrary, we should all of us be generous with God, Who is so liberal to us. Yet we could not tell at what point generosity began unless we had first properly informed ourselves as to where strict duty ended.

In point of fact, numbers of Catholics, thank God, go far beyond the limits of strict obligation in the matter of attending Mass. May their number ever increase, and for the following reason, amongst others. A Catholic may be right in saying: 'In my particular circumstances I am not bound to go to Mass. The difficulty is great enough to excuse me.' Be it so. But this only proves that your absence will involve no *sin*. It does not show that you will suffer no spiritual *loss* by missing the graces with which the Holy Sacrifice abounds. Let us take two people. A, though willing enough, is honestly *unable* to hear Mass. B, on the other hand, could attend, but only at pains somewhat greater than he is strictly obliged to take according to the letter of the law. A, indeed, may reasonably hope that God in His good-

Most desirable to go beyond the letter of the law.

No sin, but a great loss.

ness will make up the spiritual loss to him—above all, if he practise special devotions at home instead, uniting himself in spirit with the Holy Sacrifice. But is there no reason to fear lest B, though not guilty of sin by his repeated absence, may suffer considerable injury in his soul—not as a punishment, but just in the same way that a man will suffer in bodily health and strength by omitting to take his usual nourishment?¹

Evils
arising
from
habitual
loss of
Mass.

Moreover, granting that Mass be omitted without sin, its constant omission begets the custom of going without it, which is not unlikely to result in continued neglect, even after the lawful excuse has ceased to exist. The great *spiritual loss* arising from not attending Mass is too little thought of, and yet it often proves disastrous. There can be little doubt, I fear, that numbers of our Catholic fellow-countrymen—forced to live in places far removed from a Catholic church—gradually become estranged from their religion, albeit they may not have sinned in any particular instance by not attending church at such a distance. Doubtless, if they only did their best to supply the loss by private religious exercises at home, they would be saved, by the grace of God, from serious injury to their faith. But, taking human

¹ Lest B should appear too hardly dealt with, be it understood that he is supposed to be very indifferent to his religious duties, and glad to escape them at the first sign of a barely sufficient excuse. A, on the contrary, is well disposed, but hindered by really great obstacles, and in this sense honestly 'unable' to hear Mass.

nature as we commonly find it, such compensation is wont to be neglected, and the sad result follows. Through living constantly out of touch with church, priest, and Catholic society, they grow careless and indifferent, and too often are finally lost to the Church. Their faith dies by starvation.

Another question now presents itself: How far ^{Going out of reach of Mass.} and under what conditions is a Catholic allowed knowingly to *put impediments* in the way of attending Mass?

1. On the one hand, it is clearly unlawful to put hindrances in the way of hearing Mass simply *for the set purpose of escaping the trouble of hearing it—e.g.,* going beforehand into the country *for the purpose* of finding one's self too far from church on Sunday, out of dislike for attending Mass. This would be a direct evasion of the law.

2. On the other side, it is certain that a *serious* reason—say, such a one as would otherwise excuse from Mass—justifies a person in placing himself beyond reach of a church.

3. But what if there be no reason for going far away from church beyond *mere* pleasure, for instance? Even in this case no *sin* will be committed provided the time of departure does not approach too closely to the time when the law begins to have force—*i.e.,* at midnight on Saturday. But a Catholic would sin who, *without sufficient reason,* set out the last thing on Saturday night to a place where he knew Mass could not be had.

I will now touch upon the *conditions* needed on

Condi-
tions for
hearing
Mass
validly.

1. Pre-
sence.

the worshipper's part for satisfying his obligation of hearing Mass.

1. He must be *present in body morally*—i.e., if not physically inside the church, he must be so placed, at least, as to be fairly considered part of the congregation and associated with it in worship. He must be able to follow the chief parts of the rite either by seeing, or hearing, or by watching the actions of others; but there must not be too great a distance between himself and the rest.¹ A man stationed a mile off might, with the aid of a telescope, observe the religious acts of people kneeling in the open doorway of an overflowing church, and thus know the chief events occurring at the altar, yet he would hardly be considered present at the Mass.

2. Will to
hear
Mass.

2. The *will to hear Mass* is also essential, as against presence with a fixed intention of *not* taking part in worship, or as opposed to attendance under physical compulsion. But the worshipper, provided he actually hears Mass, need not expressly *mean* to obey the law—just as for Easter duties it is enough actually to approach the Sacraments worthily within the period fixed, whether a person *thinks* of his obligation or not. The Church only commands the *acts* prescribed, and, these once performed, duty has been substantially satisfied.

3. 'Ex-
ternal'
attention.

3. *Attention*.—There are two kinds of attention :

¹ It is quite possible to follow Mass without, however, either seeing or hearing the *priest*—say, by noticing the Mass-bell or the music.

Internal, which means that the worshipper's mind applies itself to the words and actions of the priest, or to the sacred mysteries being enacted, or to praising or worshipping God in prayers or holy meditation—in other words, attention *with actual devotion*. Then there is *external* attention, which only requires that the worshipper should not occupy himself in any way that is of its nature *incompatible* with the hearing of Mass, though his mind may be constantly and wilfully distracted. For example, sleeping or conversing earnestly for a great part of the Mass, would be incompatible occupations. Now, only *external* attention is *strictly* necessary for a bare compliance with the law. Notice, I am very far from *recommending* this lowest form of attention. At the same time, the fact that it *just* suffices will be of comfort to the scrupulous, who sometimes fancy they have not heard Mass because they have been greatly distracted during it. Even when distractions are wholly wilful, and hence venially sinful, it is by no means easy to *avoid* hearing Mass substantially. Indeed, given that a person is present, that he starts with the intention of joining in the Holy Sacrifice, and does not retract that intention, it is highly improbable he should fail to fulfil in substance his duty of hearing Mass, although he may not have recited any prayers at all of his own.

After this one need hardly add that the use of a prayer-book, or other aids to private devotion—however desirable and to be recommended, if helpful—is not necessary as a matter of obligation.

Thus, we have less cause to be surprised or disedified at Catholics at home or abroad who make smaller use of private devotions during Mass than is usual with ourselves. Attendance at Mass is an act of '*exterior* worship of God,' as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches. The Roman Catechism, also, states that it is the '*external* worship due from us to God' that is prescribed by the Commandment.¹

No degree
of devo-
tion too
great.

But, still, if we consider the unspeakable holiness of this Great Sacrifice, no degree of interior piety will appear too great for Its deserts. Hence, all should strive to assist at It with deepest *inward* devotion, and use every help to this end. The *measure* of graces and blessings reaped will largely depend upon personal effort.

¹ The italics are the writer's.

No. XVII.

OBSERVANCE OF THE SUNDAY—*Continued.*

2. FORBIDDANCE OF SERVILE WORK.

So far I have dealt with what we are commanded to do on Sundays: now to speak of what is forbidden us, namely, the doing of *servile work*—i.e., without a sufficient cause.

Notice, only 'servile' work is prohibited. ^{What is 'servile'?} What, then, is servile work? First of all, not necessarily *paid* work, or work done to gain a living or for personal profit of some kind. For the fact that work is done freely or disinterestedly will not deprive it of its servile character, nor, on the contrary, does receipt of payment render servile an occupation that is not so otherwise. It is the *nature* of the work, and not its motive, that determines the question. *Servile* work (from *servus*, a servant) is work of a kind usually allotted to servants, or working-people—which more directly ministers to the needs and well-being of the body—and in which bodily powers are chiefly exercised. It is only work of this sort that falls under the forbiddance.

There are, however, other kinds of work: 'Liberal' and 'mixed' occupations.
1. That called *liberal* occupation, in which the *mind* takes a leading part—which benefits or develops the mind—and is commonly, if not

exclusively, performed by masters and mistresses, rather than by their dependents. 2. What is termed *mixed* occupation—*i.e.*, which shares in some degree the character of both *servile* and *liberal* work, being common alike to those of higher and of lower degree.

Illustrations.

To give some examples of each of these three classes of work : *Servile*—breaking stones, digging, mechanical arts, such as carpentering, ordinary sewing, tailoring, dressmaking, etc. These are not allowed. *Liberal*—study, drawing, artistic painting, singing, playing musical instruments. These are lawful. So, too, highly artistic embroidery—say, of figures, or other designs calling for *mental* effort—would be permissible, whereas ordinary plain sewing, knitting, or crochet-work would not, as being chiefly mechanical. *Mixed*—travelling, walking, fishing, and the like. These are lawful, and hence the servile labour of others which is necessary for supplying the means for these pursuits is also lawful—*e.g.*, railway servants, stable-men, coachmen, motor-men (*chauffeurs*), etc.

Kinds of work which would otherwise be allowable become unlawful and servile when the *conditions under which they are performed* invest them with a servile character. Thus, although painting or photography are allowable as *liberal* occupations, yet if performed on a large scale, entailing great preparations, labour and mess, they become notably *servile*. One can see the difference, for instance, between working quietly at a small

water-colour painting, and executing a fresco on a wall or ceiling—with considerable bodily fatigue, mixing of colours, and working costume.

It has been already hinted that there are certain reasons which justify servile work. The following are the chief ones :

Reasons
excusing
servile
works.

1. *Necessity*—whether the need be our own or another's.¹ Poor people, who could not otherwise support themselves, or who would probably lose their employment through failing to finish their work in time, are allowed to work privately, taking care to avoid giving scandal. Again, the chance of making some *extra profit* will justify such poor toilers in working on forbidden days, for the reason that in their case it would be a serious loss to forfeit the extra gain.

1. Need.

Those under authority who are made to work do not sin, except the pressure be put upon them clearly out of contempt for religion. For *serious reasons* employers may rightly require servants to perform servile work beyond the usual.

Clothes, etc., may be mended or made up by those who have no time for this on other days. Even if a person has had the time, but, through not using it, finds himself in the necessity of working when Sunday comes, he will not sin *by doing the work*, but only in neglecting the previous opportunity—if, that is to say, he then *foresaw* the consequence of putting off. Here,

¹ 'Necessity' must not here be taken in its strict and absolute sense, as applied, for instance, to food, but only as implying *serious need* attended by great inconvenience.

again, care must be taken to prevent scandal, either by explaining or by avoiding observation. Work the interruption of which would cause serious loss or inconvenience may be continued—*e.g.*, hay-making, fruit-picking, stoking of furnaces.

Blacksmiths and farriers may do jobs in cases of urgency—*e.g.*, repairing a plough needed early the next day.

Public need, too, makes lawful the repairing of bridges, railroads, and like works.

2. Legitimate custom.

2. *Custom*.—When a custom at variance with the letter of a law becomes well established anywhere, it modifies law, rendering lawful what otherwise and elsewhere would be wrong. This rule rests on the supposition that the authority making the law, or charged with seeing to its observance, has knowingly tolerated the laxer practice without protest, and hence has tacitly consented to it.¹

This must be borne in mind when criticising the Sunday observance of other lands, when less severe than in our own. Thus, in some parts, certain shops for the commoner necessities—such as food and clothing—are kept open, at least for some hours, and we ought not at once to condemn the tradesmen as sabbath-breakers. Local reasons

¹ This would not hold good when the work is, on the face of it, of a pronounced servile type—*e.g.*, breaking stones, ploughing, and the like. It applies, however, to making rosaries, imitation flowers—permitted by custom in some countries.

may have brought the practice into being—say, the lack of a Saturday half-holiday such as we have in England, with the opportunity it gives to working people for taking in supplies for Sunday. In such places exemplary tradespeople perhaps keep their shop doors shut, or by some other device mark the sacredness of the day.

Bargains and sales may be carried out between individuals, provided the public intervention of law officials and legal formalities be not required. As to public markets and sales, customs vary in different countries.

3. *Piety towards God* also justifies servile labour done in more *immediate* preparation for the worship of God—*e.g.*, ordinary church-work, arranging altars, necessary dusting and sweeping, etc.—provided such work be done gratuitously. Not that the lack of payment makes work less servile, as we have already said, but that the object of pecuniary gain interferes with the motive of piety by which the work would alone be justified. A religious motive would not excuse work more distantly connected with Divine worship—*e.g.*, building churches, making church furniture, etc.

4. *Charity* forms another reason for servile work—*e.g.*, in attending to the sick. One may for charity's sake work for a particular poor person who would himself be allowed to work on the ground of necessity. But it does not seem lawful to make articles destined to be sold for the benefit of the poor, except, of course, the need be urgent.

5. Dispensation.

5. *Dispensation*, however, is sometimes granted by higher ecclesiastical authority for church-building, particularly when labourers give their work freely on Sundays or feast-days. Thus, several fine village churches in Malta, and no doubt elsewhere, have been built in this way with permission of the Holy See.

In countries where the canonical parish system obtains, parish priests, properly so called, can dispense *individuals* for sufficient reasons, but not the parish generally and as a whole. A question may here present itself concerning missionary lands like ours, where Catholic churches are *missions*, but not strictly *parishes* or 'livings.' This is not the proper place, however, to discuss whether the dispensing power referred to be extended by custom to Missionary Rectors, or head-priests of missions. Evidently many hold this to be the case. It is enough, therefore, to say that a member of the congregation need not scruple to avail himself of leave to work, whether the latter be given him strictly as a *dispensation* (i.e., a favour granted by authority) or merely as a *theological decision* upon which he may act with a safe conscience. The right of giving a decision of this sort belongs to any priest whatever, and its *practical* effect upon the conscience of the parishioner is the same as dispensation.

Guilt of servile work.

As to *how much servile work* (without lawful cause) will amount to *grievous* sin, it may be said in general that a *notable portion of the twenty-four hours* must be spent in the unlawful occupation. Thus

far Catholic moralists would agree; but there is naturally some difference of opinion in estimating what precise length of time suffices to constitute a *notable* portion. From two and a half to about three hours seems to be the range within which opinions vary. But where the work is specially laborious in character the above minimum should perhaps be somewhat reduced.

Putting in a few stitches by way of repairs, sewing on a missing button, perfunctorily dusting a 'bike' (I do not say *regularly cleaning and overhauling it*), and like jobs occupying but a *few minutes*, would be quite lawful—even though there were no need at all—on account of the admitted axiom: 'The law does not heed mere trifles.'

Let me conclude by referring to a difficulty which besets us Catholics who live in the midst of those ignorant of Catholic teaching. How far is a Catholic bound to consult non-Catholic prejudices in the matter of Sunday observance? For many pursuits held by us to be lawful are regarded by Protestants as profanation of the Lord's Day. For instance, I play operetta music on Sunday, and my Protestant neighbours are scandalized thereat. Do I sin if I advert to the effect upon them of thus lawfully amusing myself? If a sin at all, it is that of scandal.¹ But is it really such? To constitute scandal, in the theological sense, my act must either be wrong, or at least bear the resemblance of wrong, as, for instance, if, without

¹ The subject of scandal is dealt with at some length under the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue.

explaining, I eat meat on Fridays before those who think I have no reason nor dispensation to do so. Further, my action must tend to *cause spiritual injury* to those witnessing it, and not merely supply an excuse for wrong-doing to the already ill-disposed.

Now, my musical performance is neither wrong nor does it present the appearance of wrong, though ignorance and faulty religious training may lead some to see harm in it. The only real spiritual harm that can be anticipated from my conduct is an increased bad opinion of the Catholic Faith. What sort of scandal, then, is this? Is it that of the *weak*—*i.e.*, ignorant and inexperienced—or is it *pharisaical*—*i.e.*, prompted by ill-will and readiness to impute evil? If of the ‘weak,’ charity would ordinarily require me to forego my amusement, unless the check upon my liberty proved a serious grievance. But if ‘pharisaical,’ I need pay no heed to critics.

No doubt we all know Protestants whose objection to such recreation on a Sunday would be conscientious and genuine, and to these some deference should, if possible, be paid. But more commonly, perhaps, the objections are not genuine, but proceed from preconceived dislike to everything Catholic, thus partaking of the nature of *pharisaical* captiousness.

It seems, then, that except I have good reason for attributing the criticism to an honest, religious spirit, albeit carried to puritanical excess, I may disregard my censors. Any ill opinion of the

Catholic Church accidentally resulting may be set down rather to ill-will on their part, than to my conduct.

Public outdoor games played on Sundays in Games, Catholic schools and institutions are often defended on the ground that any umbrage taken at these innocent and healthy sports must be pharisaical, and this defence appears sound enough. But even granting the scandal taken to be 'of the weak,' the inconvenience, and even the spiritual harm, to be feared from denying to youthful spirits a healthy outlet, and making religion hateful to them, would seem ample reason for allowing such games. Any opportunity, however, that may occur for explaining their lawfulness to those who misunderstand our religion should be made use of to prevent a bad impression. As a rule, it is not hard to do this in the case of sensible non-Catholics.

It only remains to add, for completeness' sake, Lawsuits that law proceedings, and commercial transactions, and trading except in so far as established custom in different forbidden, places has largely modified the prohibition, are both forbidden on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

No. XVIII.

A. DUTIES OF PARENTS.

'Honour thy father and thy mother.'

Right
order of
charity.

IN the preceding Letters on the Ten Commandments, those precepts have been explained which deal more directly with our personal duty towards God, and towards persons and things closely connected with Him. We will now have a look at those other Commandments which regulate our conduct towards our fellow-men, and speak to us of the duties we owe to them. This is indeed the right order to observe. For after our Lord had said: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul,' etc., He added, 'And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Our duty to God comes first; our duty to man comes second. Thus, people whose *whole* idea of religion is to embark upon charitable works for bettering the earthly lot of their fellows, who regard religion 'pure and undefiled' as consisting *only* in providing food, clothing, housing for the poor, in establishing or supporting hospitals, orphanages, and like philanthropic enterprises, forget the first and chief element in true religion, which is the worship of God in their own hearts and

lives, and the subjection of their free wills to the law of His commandments in their daily conduct.

And yet we must be careful not to fall into an opposite error. It would be an equally big mistake to fancy that we can serve God properly in our own conduct while neglecting our duty towards others. If any man say, 'I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar' (1 John iv. 20). True religion, then, must be made up of both elements: personal love and personal service of God, and love and service of our neighbour for God's sake.

Among human duties, those belonging to the *family* come first. We human beings are not isolated units. God has gathered us together into a society, and the unit of human society is the family. So that we may say that upon the due observance of family obligations the good of the human race principally depends. Of family duties, those which bind parents and children are of primary importance; and it is these which must now occupy our attention. The family.

To take, first of all, the *duties of parents towards their children*. Why first? you may ask—nay, you may even say, Why *at all*? Is not this a strange way of treating the command: 'Honour thy father and thy mother?' Why, the precept in its wording says nothing whatever about the duties of parents. It speaks only of the duty of children to honour father and mother. Quite true—the words of the precept don't *say* anything of parental duties, but they imply their existence. Parental duties. All Catholics know that Our Lord established His

Duties of
parents
and
children
mutual.

Church on earth to teach us the nature of all our duties in this world; and the Church, interpreting the force of the Divine command, has always taught that duties between parents and children are *mutual*. If a son must honour his parent, this is only a just return and exchange for the love and care which the parent owes to him. The duty cuts both ways, as duties between men always do. Thus, if a servant is bound to serve his master, the latter is under a corresponding obligation to treat the servant justly and kindly. A soldier or sailor owes obedience and respect to his officers, but they in turn are bound to act with justice and humanity towards their subordinates. While subjects owe loyalty to their King, the King is bound to rule for the good of his people. One Being alone is there towards whom we have a strict duty, but who cannot be said in the same strict sense to have a duty towards us, and that is Almighty God. God does indeed love and care for us in His all-embracing, infinite goodness. He promises this, and, as a 'faithful God,' fulfils His pledge far beyond our deserts. Still, as our God and Creator, He cannot be bound to us creatures in the same way that we are bound to Him. Between man and man the case is different. Their equality of nature alters the case. Here duties lie both ways.

The Church, then, interprets the Fourth Commandment as binding parents as much as children. Besides her teaching, we have that of the Holy Scriptures. St. Paul in two places expressly

points out the duties of parents. Besides exhorting children to obedience, he addresses the parents in these words: 'And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord' (Eph. vi. 4; see also Col. iii. 20, 21).

For convenience we may divide the duties of parents into two.

They are bound (1) *to love* their children, (2) *to care* for them in *body* and *soul*.

The *love* which parents are to bear their sons and daughters is something more than—something different in kind to—that ordinary charity owing from a man to his neighbour. It forms of itself a special virtue, called by a name taken from the Latin tongue, 'piety.' It is the virtue of *relatives* Love of children. in their dealings with each other. We have no good word in English for expressing this idea. For the English word 'piety,' in its ordinary use, means an inclination for religious things, as when we speak of a 'pious' person. Perhaps 'dutifulness,' 'devotedness,' or 'affection,' or all three put together, would best convey what is here meant by 'piety.' But however we express it, the practical point is that an act of uncharitableness against a relative is a sin of its own special kind, and greater or less according to the degree of relationship. To take an illustration: A father who has taken away his son's character by publishing his hidden sins does not satisfy his duty in confession by accusing himself of 'detraction,' as though he had only defamed an ordinary neigh-

'Piety.'

bour. He must explain that it is a *near relative* he has just injured. His offence against parental 'piety' alters the nature of the sin.

Defect of
love.

It may be useful to note some of the principal ways in which parents may violate their duty to love their children. They may love *too little*, or they may love *too well* and unwisely. It is wrong for them to entertain violent dislike or hatred of their children, to nurse jealousy of them, to refuse to look at them, to speak to them, to associate with them, or to deny them signs of affection—though where children have been undutiful, and show no regret for their misconduct, it may be lawful as a punishment to give some such signs of displeasure temporarily. But this should be done for the honest purpose of proper correction, and not out of spite or passionate revenge.

Excessive
indul-
gence and
its effects.

Yet just as parents may love too little, so they may love *too much*, and offend by excessive indulgence. Parents who have wayward, disrespectful, vicious sons or daughters often wonder how it is they are so afflicted in their children. A father has, we will suppose, a son of some sixteen or seventeen summers, who shapes very badly. The youth lies, he is dishonest, he drinks, he goes with bad companions and falls into their bad ways. The grieved father cannot understand it, and protests: 'I'm sure I am very strict with John; he never gets any bad example at home. Why, the other night I thrashed him well for coming home half drunk after spending all his earnings. Why does God give me such a bad son?' Yet the

explanation of the mystery may be quite simple, and parents may only have themselves and their guilty over-indulgence to thank for such bitter sorrows. When that son was a young child—say, during the first seven or eight years of his life—he was allowed to do very much as he pleased. His evil inclinations in the smaller things of childhood were not repressed, were perhaps laughed at, or even admired as evidences of a strong character. Commands were given him in most peremptory tones, but never *enforced* if the child resisted. Blood-curdling punishments were continually threatened for the most trivial faults, but not even the mildest correction was ever executed. The young scamp knew from experience that he had but to cry, and kick, and stamp, and he would get whatever he wanted, and be allowed to leave undone whatever he disliked. This is the simple secret of many domestic sorrows, and the original source of many a family shame. Of what use is severity to a lad of sixteen, if you gave him all his own way and flattered his faults when a child of six? Such criminal weakness may be called excess of love, but it is, in fact, the very height of cruelty. Perhaps mothers are more to blame in this respect than fathers; for it is they who have most to do with the management of young children, and it is generally during those precious earlier years that good or bad habits take root, and determine the growth of the future man.

Reaping
the whirl-
wind.

A parent, too, may sin by excess of love towards *one particular child* at the expense of the rest.

Favourit-
ism.

This is no uncommon fault. No doubt, as human nature goes, it is well-nigh impossible for parents not to have their preferences. Who is not more drawn towards a bright, clever, comely child than towards a dull, stupid, and ungainly one—except, perhaps, the poor mother, whose heart always goes out specially towards the weakling or the cripple! But there must be a measure in all this, and it must not go to the length of constantly *showing* the preference in a hundred practical ways, and at every turn, making little or no account of the less loved one, sacrificing its present interests and future prospects for the sake of the favourite, and saddening its young life with the cruel sense of neglect and unequal treatment.

The *duties of parents*, as we have seen, are twofold. First, to love their children; secondly, to take care of them *temporally* and *spiritually*—that is, to look after their temporal well-being and to promote the welfare of their souls. I have dealt with the first of these duties, so now we will pass to the second one.

Temporal
care of
children.

1. It is a common saying that 'true love shows itself in deeds.' So it is by taking proper care of their family that parents give practical proof of their love. To begin with care in *temporal* matters. It is the duty of parents to afford their little ones suitable and healthy nourishment, to procure cleanliness in all that concerns them, and to nurse them carefully and tenderly in their numerous ailments and sicknesses, securing medical treatment for them in good time when needful.

If parents belong to a station in life in which it is customary to entrust the care of children to others, they are not free to wash their hands of all further responsibility. They are still bound to keep a watchful eye upon nurses and servants, and to see that these do not injure or neglect their charge. It is not an uncommon abuse to find a mother shirking the monotony and worry of personally attending to her children. She finds it more pleasant to saddle others with that irksome task. She is too much taken up with 'social duties,' as she expresses it—a term often wrongly applied to an endless round of gossip, pleasures, and excitements. The children 'bother her,' 'get upon her nerves,' so she seldom sees them in the twenty-four hours, and then hurriedly in the bustle of rushing off to some 'social duty.' The truth that she has *family* and *domestic* duties as well as 'society' ones—and that these last come *second*—never seems to enter her fashionable head. The fact is, a modern mother of this sort wants to get all the advantages of a wife, but to escape the burdens of a *mother*.

Shirking
duties.

The
fashion-
able
mother

Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that such shirking of serious duties can only be found amongst the rich. A mother of some poor family may be equally at fault in her own way; and since in her case there are no paid servants to supply for her shortcomings, the injury to the children is all the greater. Poor parents are, it is true, shut out by their condition from most of life's pleasures. In their hard struggle for exist-

Parents
whodrink.

ence they have neither time nor means for such. Yet there is one form of pleasurable self-indulgence which so often, alas! destroys all sense of duty in poorer parents—I mean the animal gratification of *intemperance in drink*. Do not mistake me, my friends. I am far from thinking that this vice is confined to the working classes. All I mean is that—for the very reason that they are deprived of most other outlets—the poor are more strongly tempted to a form of sensuality which comes so readily to hand. And once this base passion gets hold of parents, comfort, cleanliness, and industry go overboard; and the poor children are the first to suffer from the effects of this evil in disease, ill-treatment, want, and neglect. What vile selfishness! The little ones may ail, sicken, and die for want of proper food, attendance, and seasonable clothing. What matter? The drunken father or—heaviest of all curses—the drunken mother *must* have drink. Charitable ladies and others, pitying the sad plight of the children, and deceived as to its real cause by false excuses (for who ever *owns* to being a drunkard?), supply food, clothing, boots, and the rest. Charity wasted! These kindly gifts never reach the children, but only the nearest pawnshop, to be turned into cash. For though all the world go to wrack and ruin, the parents *will* have drink!

Provision
for
children's
future.

But to continue. To *provide for the future* of their children—as far as may be possible—or to put them in the way of getting work and occupa-

tion, is another parental duty. If the work does not yield sufficient for their support, parents must, if possible, supply the deficiency. They are not justified in simply sending their sons and daughters adrift, without provision, to shift for themselves as best they may, giving no further thought to their needs.

We come now to a most important part of ^{Educa-} parental duty—that of giving their children a ^{tion.} sufficiently good *education* according to their position in life. Parents of the poorer classes who avail themselves of State education should be regular in sending their children to school, even at some inconvenience to themselves. This is specially needed nowadays, when education is so easily had, and when a want of it handicaps young people so heavily in the race and struggle of life. In the case of sons and daughters who must work for their living, a parent should see that they learn some trade or occupation by means of which they may be able with industry to support themselves by their own efforts. Parents will be glad of this in their old age, when they will look to their children for help. Space does not allow me to say more on the temporal side of parental duty.

2. Important though the temporal well-being of ^{Spiritual} children may be, the welfare of their ^{care.} *souls*—their *religious* and *spiritual* welfare—is of still greater moment. Indeed, care for the souls of their children evidently takes the *first* place in parental duties. God has committed to fathers and mothers, not merely the care of their children's bodies, but the

still weightier charge of their precious immortal souls, which they are consequently bound to shield from sin and harm.

Priest's
position
in the
matter.

But is not this rather the priest's business? you may ask. Does it not belong to the Church to look after the good of souls? Most certainly—and yet all the care of spiritual pastors may be of little use if parents themselves neglect *their* duty, particularly in the *earlier* years of childhood. So, too, even clerical educators will hardly be able to undo bad habits contracted at home. Colleges and schools are not reformatories, though some would appear to think so.¹

Example
better
than pre-
cept.

And here we must insist upon the following truth—namely, that good *teaching* and advice will seldom keep children in the right path unless accompanied by good *example*. It is all very well to tell children: 'You must do as I *say*: never mind what I *do*.' But is it likely that a child's mind will grasp the need of being good when its own parents—whom it looks up to in all things—lead bad or indifferent lives? Human nature is a great copyist, and is more inclined to imitate what others actually do than to follow what they preach but do not practise. True, it is always

¹ During an inquiry (1902) into the spread of betting, before a Committee of the House of Commons, the Headmaster of Harrow referred to the powerlessness of schoolmasters to check the evil amongst their scholars. In most cases falling under his notice it was the parents who were mainly to blame, the taste for betting being acquired and fostered *at home*.

something that a mother, who is careless of religion herself, should, at all events, see that her children attend Sunday Mass and Catechism. This observance on the children's part—enforced by command but not by example—may last while the children are young and under stricter control; but when they grow older, and have more liberty, it will probably fall off, or perhaps cease altogether. The younger child merely *wonders* why parents do not need to go to church; the older child begins to *reason*, and may argue: 'Father and mother don't go, so why should I?' And so, too, in other matters. Good example is *all-important* as an educator. The old story of the Yorkshireman who was found severely chastising his boy, and who, when asked the reason, replied triumphantly, 'Why, dom 'im, he sweers!' gives us, I fear, a pretty fair sample of the *only* zeal for family virtue shown by some parents.

I have spoken above of education as part of the *temporal* care due to children. But education has, besides, its *spiritual* and *religious* aspect, the importance of which it would be hard to exaggerate. Needless to say, no Catholic father or mother can freely consent to any one of the children being brought up otherwise than as a Catholic—a point to be kept well in mind by anyone who is thinking of marrying a non-Catholic (after obtaining the necessary leave or 'dispensation' from the Bishop of the diocese through their priest). Further, no Catholic parent can, without *grievous sin*, send either boys or girls to schools where, all circum-

Religious
education.

stances well considered, their Catholic Faith or Catholic morals will be exposed to grave danger. Instances may, however, occur—oftener in the case of poorer, but seldom, if ever, in that of well-to-do parents—where sheer necessity obliges them to avail themselves of schools or institutions managed by non-Catholics, and where most of the pupils are non-Catholics. It is clearly not to be expected that in such establishments any *positive help* will be given the child in the practice of its Catholic Faith, even supposing that teachers honourably abstain from tampering with the child's faith, and school-companions do not ridicule its teaching—a *serious* danger for children of a weak, or else sensitive, character. Well, if poorer parents sometimes really have no choice in the matter, they are all the more bound to provide against spiritual injury to their child *by taking proper precautions*. They must make up in other ways for the absence of a Catholic *tone* and *influence* at the school. Above all, they must see that the child does not neglect its prayers; that it is carefully and regularly instructed in the faith, goes to Mass, is prepared for First Confession, First Communion, and Confirmation, at the proper age, has full opportunity for going to the Sacraments, and that it is not thrown with bad companions.

Parental
responsi-
bility
great.
Worldly
parents.

There is no neglect of duty for which parents will have to give a stricter account to God than that of *seriously risking their children's faith or morals* for the sake of sending them to non-

Catholic schools or colleges. Nor will certain worldly gains, whether intellectual, social, or material, which parents hope for from such a course, excuse their sinful conduct. To endanger the eternal interests of their offspring for the sake of their temporal advancement in after-life is nothing but worldliness, pure and simple. For worldliness means preferring this world to the next, the body before the soul, the goods of earth before Almighty God. Plainly enough does our Lord condemn such folly: 'What shall it profit a man,' He tells us, 'if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'¹ Moreover, such worldliness on the part of parents is of a most *unnatural* kind, because it injures the *highest* interests of those to whom they are bound by the closest ties known to Nature. In England the hand of the law falls heavily on parents guilty of cruelty and neglect towards the *bodies* of their children—and rightly. Yet such injury to the body, unnatural and wicked though it be, is a small matter compared to ill-treatment of a child's *soul*, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus, and the object of the special love of His Sacred Heart. You know how Our Lord blessed and embraced Christ and children. children, and said: 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.'² You remember, too, His terrible words: 'He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should

¹ St. Mark viii. 36.

² St. Mark x. 14-16.

be tied about his neck, and that he should be cast in the depth of the sea.’¹

What a good thing it would be if parents meditated oftener upon this awful warning! Then, perhaps, we might seldom hear of sons and daughters giving up their faith, or at least the practice of it, for the sake of some earthly love or gain. Poor souls! Perhaps they are only doing what their parents did before them, in the matter of their education—that is, making sure of this world and chancing Heaven—thus preparing the ground for a like forgetfulness of God on the part of their children.

Dear readers, God save from all such wicked folly those of you who are or may be parents!

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 6.

NOTE.—The Decree of Pope Pius X., ‘On Daily Reception of the Eucharist,’ in which ‘*all* the faithful’ (and hence the youngest child which has been admitted to its first Communion) are exhorted to receive frequently, and even daily, evidently places a restriction on the exercise of parental authority. Parents are exceeding their rights who prevent their children from carrying out the desire of the Vicar of Christ on *religious* pretexts—*e.g.*, that Angela is too young, Willy too disobedient, or Margaret too thoughtless, etc. Still less are they warranted in positively opposing the express direction of their children’s confessors, given in conformity with the Papal Decree.

See tract, ‘Parents and Communions of Children,’ by the present writer. (Sands and Co., Bedford Street, W.C.; Hanover Street, Edinburgh.)

No. XIX.

B. DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

WE come now to the duties of *children towards their parents*—those duties more expressly alluded to in the wording of this Commandment. I have already explained that there is a special virtue, beyond ordinary charity, to be practised between those related by flesh and blood—that is, *piety*, as it is called. The words ‘affection,’ ‘devotedness,’ ‘dutifulness,’ have been suggested as conveying together, more or less, the meaning of this technical term.

The question we have now to answer is: In ^{Threefold} what ways are children bound to practise ‘piety,’ ^{duty.} towards parents? In three ways. They are bound (1) to *reverence* or respect, (2) to *love*, and (3) to *obey* their parents. All three are comprised in the command ‘to honour.’ For what is meant by honouring? Recognising the position, or merits, or gifts of another. Now, Nature itself has given to parents a position of *superiority*, and to the children, who owe life to them, one of *subjection* and *necessary dependence*. Reason itself, therefore, requires children to acknowledge that superiority by paying *reverence* to it and *submitting* to it.

Nature, again, demands of parents many acts of ^{1. Respect} love and self-sacrifice in the rearing and bringing ^{for} parents.

up of children, and this their loving care begets a corresponding duty of *love* on the children's part. Remember that this superiority of parents is a *natural* one; it is theirs by the very fact that they are parents. So it does not depend upon any special good qualities which they may have or may lack.

Snobbish
children.

Many youths and young maidens, I fear, deem themselves nowadays very 'superior' to their sires, because—perhaps through the industry and self-pinching of the latter—they have enjoyed a far higher education than their parents ever had. Susan, aged about sixteen, trained at a Higher Grade School, or Boarding School for Young Ladies (for, as often remarked, to-day all are ladies except those who are gentlemen)—well, Susan possesses a smattering of French, can play (?) the piano, embroider a bit, draw, or paint, etc. Her mother, who only passed the 'standards,' cannot write a presentable letter, is unrefined of speech, while cooking, plain-sewing and general housewifery, sum up her accomplishments. (Alas for the rarity!) So once the girl is able to reflect upon her advantages, especially once the long hair is curled up and dresses assume the dimensions of womanhood, filial *reverence* begins to weaken—if it has not already done so—and saucy, cross answers, disrespectful quizzing, unruliness, signs of mild contempt, become the mother's daily bread—sins against reverence. So, too, Jim—blessed with better schooling and training than his father, practising a more skilled

trade, earning 'better money,' and so contributing more to the family exchequer—at length begins to swell with his own importance, to look down upon his more humble parents, and to treat them with scant respect. He begins to domineer, to lay down the law, to bully and order about everyone at home. 'Things have gone ahead a lot since your time, guv'nor: you're a bit slow for us, and'—most heinous of all!—'you're behind the age.' Such is too often the mental attitude of sons in higher as in lower ranks of life towards the authors of their being. I refrain from discussing how much or how little truth may underlie such filial criticisms. That is not the point. Be parents as 'good' as their children or not, the duty of reverence still remains in full force. Whatever be their alleged accidental defects, parents are still parents, and upon this one unalterable ground rests the duty of reverencing them. The duty of *obedience*—of which more presently—may narrow down somewhat when sons and daughters become of age or pass beyond home control; but that of *reverence* must suffer no diminution. Hence it is *grievously* sinful to speak very insultingly to parents, to really *despise* them secretly, to *run them down continually* in conversation, and still more to show outwardly *serious* contempt for them.

As to the forms which filial *love* should take, ^{2. Love of parents.} what I have already said concerning *parental* love will hold good mostly with regard to filial love, with certain obvious alterations. Thus, to cherish jealousy and hatred is forbidden to

children as much as to parents. It is not easy for a child to love *too much*, except possibly by making too marked a difference between one parent and another, so that either has reason to feel slighted. I mean, of course, something more than that natural clinging of daughters to mothers, and of sons to fathers, which seems to lie in the nature of things.

But love
of God
first.

There is, however, one way in which affection for parents may exceed due limits, namely, where love of flesh and blood comes into conflict with the love due, first and foremost, to Almighty God. Take the not uncommon case of a child of Protestant parents who becomes fully convinced of the exclusive truth of the Catholic Faith. Such a one is called upon to choose between forfeiting God's love by not answering His call to the Catholic Church, and deeply grieving fond and well-loved parents, who in good faith abhor Catholicism. A sore and bitter conflict to the heart of any loving child! Something near the heroism of a martyr may be needed in order to bravely face the struggle and win the victory. Yet—thanks to the power of God's grace, which can be had in plenty by the most timid and perplexed simply for the asking—heroes and heroines of the kind are plentiful all around us. But, ah, how painful the wrench when it comes! How long it leaves the poor heart all raw and bleeding! Still, the wounds *must* be borne, for the love of Christ crucified; the heart must bear the lance-thrust, even as His Heart did. His words of

solemn warning can never pass away: 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.'¹ Again, 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'² Even the saving of a mother's love would not save such an exchange from being the very worst of bad bargains.

In other matters, too, of right and wrong no regard for the ties of relationship can justify the least sin against the Commandments of God, or those of the Church—Christ's *other self* on earth.

Filial love also requires children to have a care for the *temporal* well-being of parents. This includes due attention to their health and reasonable comfort—not causing them injury or suffering for the sake of indulging their own selfish whims, or in order to advance their own selfish aims. Restless craving for pleasures, excitements, and change, may often betray grown-up sons and daughters into this kind of inconsiderateness. Children ought to remember, as they grow up, the long years during which parents have toiled for them without any return, and perhaps at great sacrifices. Hence, they are strictly bound in turn to contribute towards their support according to their *power* and to the parental *need*. Yet one finds revolting examples of cruelly selfish children, who, instead of helping parents, only drain their purse by continual exactions, and inflict upon

Love includes care—
Temporal.

¹ St. Matt. x. 37.

² St. Mark viii. 36.

them severe privations. And not for necessities, but, *e.g.*, a son, that he may have spare cash to squander upon gambling, betting, and drink, on entertaining fast companions, on expensive dress and extravagant habits, to enable him to 'swell it' before his friends, or for still more degraded objects. A daughter—that she may dress more stylishly than her station or occupation justifies, more smartly, in fact, though only in shoddy imitation, than her mistress whom she serves in a menial capacity. It must have been a vain, silly-pated girl of this sort who, having been sent by a charitable lady to an orphanage at fourteen pounds a year, and being asked on arrival by her companions what her mother was, replied: 'Oh, *my ma* was a *lidy*, and 'ad *height sarvints!*' In point of fact her mother was washerwoman-in-chief in a third-rate laundry, and eight other women washed and gossiped at a large tub under her direction.

Spiritual
care.

Still more should the *spiritual* needs of parents be supplied when through sickness, old age, or some other cause, they are unable to provide for themselves. When in danger of death, their children should see that the priest be warned betimes, running no risks by putting off till the eleventh hour, when weakened faculties render the sick almost incapable of spiritual effort. How often it happens that the doctor will be promptly summoned at the first serious symptom, while the priest is never warned, but left to find out by inspiration, or else hastily summoned almost

at the last gasp! Thus do children often prefer the perishable body to the immortal soul.

Last of all we come to the duty of *obedience* to parents. In discussing the sinfulness of disobedience, a distinction must be drawn between merely *not doing* the thing commanded, and direct *defiance* of parental authority itself. These are two very different things, though both wrong. I may neglect a command either because I dislike *the thing commanded*, or I may rebelliously object to *being commanded*, and proudly despise the *authority*. This last aggravated form of disobedience is called *formal contempt* of authority, or *formal disobedience*, and if adhered to is a *mortal* sin. But the mere fact of a young child stamping and passionately screaming 'I shan't!' does not always really involve formal disobedience. This may only be a forcible expression of dislike to the *thing commanded*. In an older child it might be different. Disobedience oftener springs from dislike of the thing ordered than from the spirit of rebellion.

3. Obedience to parents.

Difference to be noted.

A boy is told to run an errand. He leaves the house. But, once out of range of observation, he promptly makes for the nearest playground, to enjoy a prearranged game of leap-frog. His notion is not to question the parent's authority, but that a game is more pleasant than labour—as we all find it!

Example.

There is, of course, always a virtual or implied disregard of authority in every disobedience, inasmuch as the order is deliberately left unfulfilled. But this is not *formal* disobedience, and in order

Conditions for mortal sin.

for it to amount to a grievous sin two conditions are necessary : (1) the command must have been *seriously given*—and all parental orders certainly are not ; (2) the thing ordered must be of *grave importance*. The habit of some erratic parents of continually giving orders right and left, but never taking the slightest notice of non-compliance, is an instance of commands *not* seriously given. A pernicious habit ! We might take the following as an instance in which both conditions for a mortal sin are present : the order strongly impressed by a mother upon her young daughter *not to be out late by herself* in the streets. This may well be a careful mother's *serious command*, and its *grave importance*, especially in towns and cities, or in certain quarters, is manifest. Equally to the point would be the case of a son sent to post some business letters for his father, with an earnest caution that he is to go at once, as it is most important. But the youth goes off for a long 'lark,' and returns home late with the letters—or at least a good few of them—safe in his trousers pocket. In imputing grievous sin in these cases, I have made no allowance for the natural giddiness of youth, though the latter would in nine cases out of ten, perhaps, materially reduce the guilt before God. I am merely considering the acts in themselves, and apart from extenuating circumstances in the offending party. It may also be usefully noted here that we are dealing with disobedience to *parents*. The sin of 'disobeying my big brother' or 'big sister' is a

pious fiction, except where parents have committed some part of their authority to the said larger individuals. *Respect* for elders is a different matter.

Now, are there any *limits* to this duty of obedience? Clearly, no command to do what is *evidently* sinful ought to be obeyed. Then, the same *extent* of obedience is not demanded of those who have attained to their legal majority, who are 'of age,' or who have lawfully passed from parental control—*e.g.*, by contracting obligations with masters, employers, etc. To these a greater freedom is due, and it would be most imprudent for parents to exaggerate their claims.

In fact, *over*-strictness and an exacting disposition with regard to children of any age, frequently produce later on the most fatal consequences. Nature—especially young nature—cannot bear excessive repression or supervision, and will take its revenge some day. This applies to *spiritual* matters quite as much as to others. A well-instructed father, whom I could not persuade to resume the practice of his religion, once pleaded the following excuse with evident sincerity. His father, he explained, had been a 'pious fool,' neglecting all his home duties in order to spend long hours daily in church. He so wearied out his sons by insisting upon their joining in his frequent and lengthy exercises that my friend had registered a solemn oath to have no more of religion for the rest of his life. Pious parents, beware! I should add that, though obedience

Limits of
obedience

Dangers
of over-
strictness.

Over-
doses in
spirituals.

must be relaxed for grown-up sons and daughters, *reverence* in thought, speech, and act, remains due from them always.

Children's
freedom
in choice
of state.

There is yet another limit to the duty of obedience, and consequently to the authority of parents. Parents, so all Catholic theologians teach, have no absolute control over their children's choice of a *state of life*. They can neither *force* them nor *forbid* them to marry; they cannot *oblige* them nor *forbid* them to adopt the *religious state*.

Marriage.

In the case of *marriage*, children are bound to *consult* their parents, at least. But except the latter have some really grave and just reason for objecting to a match, they have no right to *enforce* their views, nor to *inflict penalties*, nor are children bound to submit. Similarly, no parents can possibly have the right to prevent their children using the liberty—given them by Christ Himself in the Gospel—of following the more perfect path of the Counsels and becoming Religious. An *exceptional* case may occur in which the temporal necessity of parents is so very great that they cannot manage without the help of their children. If the need be really urgent, the child is bound to remain in the world, *i.e.*, as long as the urgency lasts. For the practice of Evangelical Counsels is not *commanded*. The observance of the Fourth Commandment *is*, and in the instance given presses for fulfilment. Apart from such an exception, the Commandment is not broken by entering a monastery or convent. If children may leave their parents to cleave to their husbands in marriage, why may they not

Religious
state.

leave home in order to unite themselves more closely to God?

One cannot say that children are bound even to take their kith and kin into their counsels when meditating entry into religion—especially when

Must
relatives
be con-
sulted?

they have reason to fear lest such consultation may prevent their arriving at an unbiassed decision, or hamper them in carrying out their holy purpose. Moreover, unlike the case of marriage, parents and relatives are hardly competent to judge of vocations. That belongs rather to spiritual guides and pastors. One may say, further, that it is a rare thing indeed to find a parent, especially a mother, however pious in other respects, who can cordially enter into the spirit of a religious vocation when it calls at her own door.

In the children of other people she can appreciate and praise it. So strong is the bias of carnal affection, so great the tenacity with which poor flesh and blood clings to its own! And yet—strange paradox!—when worldly interests are in question, mothers are sometimes eager enough to entrust the future happiness and the honour of innocent and inexperienced girls in their teens to the tender mercies of some wealthy or titled ne'er-do-weel, greedily swallowing down his ready assurances (*before marriage*) of amendment. His home or field of occupation may be at the antipodes, and not readily accessible to parents as many a convent is. Only when the Heavenly Bridegroom pays a mother of this kind the honour of asking for the child He Himself gave her, to

Incon-
sistency of
worldly
parents.

be His spiritual spouse, do insuperable objections crop up in plenty. We find the clue to this mystery in St. Paul's teaching, that those 'who are according to the flesh' have no relish for 'the things of the spirit.'

No. XX.

C. DUTIES TO SPIRITUAL PASTORS.

ONE may say that the Fourth Commandment determines the *rights* and the *duties* of those placed in authority as well as of their subjects or inferiors. Hitherto I have referred only to authorities in the temporal and natural order. To this class belong parents, rulers in the State, masters, employers, and the rest. We have, however, another class of superiors who exercise over us authority of a far higher and more sacred kind—namely, the spiritual pastors of our souls, in the *supernatural* order, or order of grace. As mere human beings we are bound to reverence and obey temporal rulers. But as Christians and members of the Catholic Church we have the further and higher duty of reverent subjection to *spiritual* superiors, to all who originally derive authority to guide and govern our souls from Our Blessed Lord, through His earthly Vicar, the successor of that chief Apostle charged by Christ with the care of the heavenly keys.¹ I propose, then, to touch upon some important points regarding a Catholic's true attitude towards the pastors of the Church.

You might think, perhaps, that in starting such a topic the present writer was—like Cicero of old—simply putting in a self-interested plea

Apology
for sub-
ject.

¹ St. Matt. xvi. 19.

for 'his own household,' since he is himself a priest of God's Church. Yet there appears no valid reason why I should exclude from 'Christian Doctrine' so important a point as the duty of the faithful towards their spiritual rulers. You must believe me, therefore, when I assure you that a sincere desire to instruct—rather than any personal and interested motive—prompts my observations. It will be my endeavour to perform my priestly task in such manner as to show my recognition of the fact that spiritual pastors have *duties* as well as rights.

Loyalty
to the
Holy See

To begin on the highest rung of the ladder of ecclesiastical dignity. There is great need, I fear, to insist strongly at the present time upon whole-hearted *loyalty* to the supreme government of the Catholic Church—whether as vested primarily in the Sovereign Pontiff, the immediate fount and source of all spiritual authority exercised within the Church, or as shared by the various Roman courts or 'Sacred Congregations,' which represent Christ's Vicar in the various departments of Church legislation and administration.

False
views of
disloyal
Catholics

The painful lack of due loyalty exhibited by some who style themselves members of the Catholic Church—to her no slight dishonour, to the scandal of their fellows, and, seemingly, with scant religious profit to themselves—would appear to spring from an entirely false conception as to the true character of the Church of God. Those peoples long accustomed to a democratic form of government in the State are more exposed than

others to the peril of hankering after popular control in the management of the Church. They forget that the essential character of Church government has been irrevocably fixed by Him Who is the Wisdom of the Father, Who has nothing to learn from experience in successive ages, and Who has not chosen to mould His earthly kingdom *into a democracy*. The complete religious society which He established for leading men to Heaven is God's Kingdom, an extension of His absolute sovereignty amongst men, and may no more be submitted to popular suffrage, or modified in deference to shifting popular opinion, than its Divine Author Himself. This does not mean, of course, that no reform is possible in accidental details of the human machinery, by means of which the Church carries out her Christ-given mission to the world. Far from it. The Church herself has throughout the centuries been constantly engaged in the work of reformation, and never more actively than in the Council of Trent—at the very time when the Protestant Reformers were justifying their defection on the ground of her supineness in reform. But whatever improvements in unessential parts of her organization may be effected, these are not to be produced by *popular clamour and agitation*, as though the Church were a Parliamentary institution. They are set in motion *from above downwards*, and not from below upwards. Christ the Son of God is the supreme and irresponsible Ruler of His Church; and, as He has pledged

Himself to be with her 'all days,' the first impulse in any work of reform will proceed from Him through the guidance of His Holy Spirit, and its execution will be initiated by the higher and not by the lower portion of the Church. Any presumptuous attempt to invert this Divine order ignores the truth that the Church and Christ Our Lord are morally *one*. The perfect solidarity between the two is a plain fact of revelation. 'He that heareth you heareth Me: and he that despiseth you despiseth Me,' are the trenchant terms in which Our Lord proclaims that the Church is His other self. Similarly, when He confided to Peter the 'Keys of His Kingdom,' and declared that what he enacted on earth would be ratified in Heaven, Christ Our Lord set forth the moral identity of Peter's authority over the Church with His own. But with this difference. The rulers of His Church are His stewards and not masters. They must govern subject to His will. They have also to give a strict account to Him, and, if in subordinate positions, to their ecclesiastical superiors as well, for the way in which they fulfil their responsibilities towards their charges. So, too, must the latter answer, in turn, for their conduct towards ecclesiastical rulers.

First duty
to the
Church.

Here, then, we have suggested to us *the first duty of a Catholic to the Church*—to look upon its supreme government as the vicegerent of Our Lord's sovereignty, and not as some man-made institution to be criticised, called to order, or

remodelled to suit 'modern thought' and the ever-changing sentiments of men. One good test of my dispositions would be this: 'Am I intimately convinced that disobedience to a serious precept of the Church *will endanger my salvation* as certainly as the violation of any one of the Ten Commandments? Do I realize that I can as infallibly be lost for all eternity for *culpably* neglecting Mass, even on holidays of obligation, as for murder or adultery?' For such is the plain truth. The authority of the Church is a participation in that of God. It matters not whether the will of God come to me from Mount Sinai or from Rome. The Divine origin and binding force of the command is fundamentally the same, though the route by which it reaches me be different. To a dutiful son, what matters it whether a parental command be heard directly from his father's own lips, or be conveyed to him by a trusty and accredited messenger?

We have next to review our position as regards those spiritual pastors with whom we have more immediately to deal — *our Bishops and priests*. Loyalty to
Bishops
and
clergy. Upon them lies the daily burden of ministering to our spiritual wants. That burden is indeed an exceedingly heavy one. At times it may even involve the sacrifice of life for the good of the sheep. It constantly makes large demands upon the patience, comfort, and strength of the shepherds. Then, is not St. Paul's appeal to the sheep a reasonable one? 'Obey your prelates, and be subject to them: for they watch as being to render

an account of your souls: that they may do this with joy, and not with grief. For this is not expedient for you.’¹

A fallacy. An abstract reverence for the Holy See, and for the Church in general, will be but mock loyalty where there is disaffection of heart and waywardness of conduct towards the Church in the concrete, and as brought home to us in the persons of our local pastors. They it is who, practically speaking, constitute the ‘Church’ for us. They are, of course, themselves subject to higher ecclesiastical authority, and amenable to it for correction. Still, they form the Church of *our daily lives*—the Church in as far as we come into direct contact with it. It is, therefore, inconsistent with loyalty for private individuals to publicly carp at and criticise the official acts of ecclesiastical rulers. A curious specimen of a Catholic must he be who carries license to the point of airing his criticism and ventilating his grievances against episcopal authority in the public press. He may be right or wrong. If wrong, then the last vestige of an excuse is taken from him. He is simply besmirching with calumny the honour of his spiritual Mother, the Church. But even if in the right, why use the secular and mostly anti-Catholic press for a public laundry? Why give the ever-watchful enemy occasion to blaspheme against the Church of God—that is, if, as the self-appointed censor is fairly certain to protest, no one surpasses him in devotion to her?

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

In our relations with *the clergy of all ranks*, no ^{Clergy and their} doubt the difficulty is to distinguish sufficiently ^{faults.} between the *priest* and the *man*. For priests, however high and holy their calling, are still men, and hence not free from faults and failings. But the blemishes we see in them at times—though naturally more noticeable and the more to be deplored on account of the very sanctity of their office—should never be allowed to eclipse in our minds the *sacredness of their character*. As St. Paul puts it: ‘Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God.’¹ He would have our faith robust enough to pierce the sad-coloured veil of human weakness, and fix our eyes upon the person of Jesus Christ, whom the priest serves in the capacity of a consecrated instrument for our sanctification. For whatever his human imperfections, these can never detract *one iota* from the Divine worth of the mysteries he dispenses. Perhaps the most mischievous and widespread form of disregard for the priestly character amongst Catholics is *reckless gossip about priests* and their doings. It should be remembered, too, in this connection, that what might be but a venial detraction from the characters of others may easily become a *grievous* one in the case of a priest. Not simply because a priest is defamed, but also on account of the great injury done to souls under his care, who will be alienated from his ministry by such depreciation. There are many ways of *doing the devil’s work* for

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

him in this world. Perhaps this is one of the most effectual. All the efforts of a truly devoted but not yet perfect priest—for the sanctification of his parishioners—may be utterly paralyzed by the busy tongues of a few mischief-makers, who magnify his failings and put sinister or frivolous interpretations upon his most innocent actions.

Subter-
fuges dealt
with.

Sometimes it is enough for one or two ring-leaders in a parish—masculine or feminine—to turn up their noses and label a priest ‘Not a *gentleman*’ (neither, by the way, was Peter, nor were his fishing partners), and the evil work is done. It is easy to say: ‘I am, *of course*, only speaking of his defects as a *man*; as a *priest* I respect him highly.’ Here, however, the necessary distinction—referred to above—between a priest’s official and his individual capacity may be pushed too far. So closely are the two aspects linked together in the concrete person that a priest will seldom be duly revered for his sacred office if he be freely ‘run down’ as a man. ‘But,’ you say, ‘the priestly calling is so sublime and holy! Surely, then, his personal conduct ought to keep pace with it? I look for all manner of virtues in one who is to guide me in the path of goodness—for all holiness in him who continually handles the most holy things of God.’ Most true. In the main, you are right—though possibly just a *trifle* exacting in your demand that the gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed in the Sacrament of Orders, should instantly convert every member of so large a body as the clergy into a full-blown saint ready

for canonization! Did the same 'Gift of the Most High God'—imparted to you in Confirmation—achieve a corresponding miracle of grace in your own case? The priest might retort: '*I* expect more charity from the hearts and lips of those who are so constantly in church and so often sanctified by the Body and Blood of Christ.' He might add, perhaps, that as his failings appear to you so much the more *damaging* on account of his priesthood, parishioners should scruple the more to trot about from house to house and from tea-table to tea-table proclaiming them—the 'foot-and-mouth' disease that can desolate whole parishes. Remember that, whatever a pastor's shortcomings, God, and not the parishioner, is the competent Judge. 'To me,' says the Apostle, 'it is a small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day: yet neither do I judge myself. *He who judges me is the Lord.*'¹

The Catholic Church, my friends, has a great and glorious work before it in England. No doubt you are all anxious, as sincere Catholics, to lend her a helping hand. Then do your utmost to add force *by union*—union with each other, and union with your Bishops and priests. It is beyond man's power to destroy the essential unity of the Church. That is the immortal dower given by Christ to His mystic Bride. But we may do much to hinder locally the precious benefits of unity by a want of loyalty and charity towards our pastors. Be careful to keep 'the unity of the

Zeal for
the faith—
a motive.

spirit in the bond of peace'—and peace will not long remain once charity has departed. Let the world see that shepherds and sheep stand united together as one man, and, by God's grace, this exhibition of mutual trust and love will—as in the first days of Christianity—draw many others into the true fold of Christ.

TEMPORAL SUPPORT OF PASTORS.

Support of
pastors.

While considering the obligations of children, we saw that they were bound, according to the need, and as far as lay in their power, to contribute towards the temporal support of their parents. A similar duty lies upon the faithful of *supporting their spiritual fathers*—the clergy. Before passing on to the next Commandment, I propose to discuss this subject briefly.

Wrong
views.

When the 'Reformed Bishops' of Queen Elizabeth's making complained to the Lord Treasurer of their diminished revenues—the effect of that system of sacrilegious spoliation started by their Sovereign's rapacious sire—Sir William Cecil sanctimoniously rebuked their lordships with the words: 'Spiritual things be meetest for spiritual persons.' Is there not something of this spirit observable at times amongst Catholics? Do not people occasionally cloak their want of generosity in giving under a disingenuous zeal for clerical unworldliness? They would not, forsooth, be parties to contaminating the priesthood by encouraging anxiety for £ s. d., nor expose it to unhallowed contact with filthy lucre.

Undoubtedly, excessive attachment to the things of earth is reprehensible in all persons—a fault, by the way, which gives rise to niggardliness in giving. It is still more blameworthy in those consecrated to God and to the care of souls. Still worse is it for the shepherds to tend the sheep merely for the sake of their fleece, and neglect those that are already close shorn and can spare none. All the same, the shepherds have a right to temporal support, and the flock under their staff a duty to provide the same. In this land especially—on account of wholesale robbery of Catholic Church property committed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and legalized by Act of Parliament—the duty of supplying the want by voluntary offerings presses more urgently and, it must be confessed, more heavily on the faithful laity.

Now, what is the principle upon which this duty rests? Certainly not that spiritual things must be bought with money, for this would constitute the hateful crime of *simony*. The holy things of God—the forgiveness of sins in Confession, the application of Our Lord's merits to the soul in the Sacraments and by means of the Holy Sacrifice, and other means of grace—are not to be purchased with gold and silver. Yet, were this possible, the Irishman's evasive but witty retort to a Protestant caviller at priest's fees would hold good: 'Sure, an' isn't it dirt cheap at the price?' Such payment, however, is impossible. There can be no proportion and no comparison between

The
clergy
need
support.

No
simony in
claiming
support.

a spiritual gift and temporal remuneration. Thus, the very essence of a purchase is absent.

The principle of the thing.

What, then, is the ground upon which spiritual pastors rightly claim temporal maintenance? On no less solid a one than Our Lord's own teaching. 'Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say: Peace to this house. . . . And in the same house remain eating and drinking such things as they have: *for the labourer is worthy of his hire.*¹

In the Old Law it was written: 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn on the floor.'² Even the ox that crushed out the grain upon the Jewish threshing-floor was to be left free to eat his share. Thus, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where St. Paul quotes this text in support of his plea for temporal sustenance, he writes: 'Have we not power to eat and drink? . . . Who feedeth the flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? . . . If we have sown spiritual things, is it a greater matter if we reap your carnal things?'

The underlying principle is clear enough. Those who devote their time, strength, and very lives, to the care of souls are thereby necessarily hindered from working out their own livelihood in other ways. Even had they time and opportunity for making a living, a strict law of the Church blocks the way, forbidding them to engage in strictly mercantile traffic—in buying and selling, and such-like. What, then, can be more just than that those who benefit by their ministrations should see they do not lack the means of living?

¹ St. Luke x. 5-7.

² Deut. xxv.

Those who enjoy a comfortable share of this world's goods are more bound to assist the clergy than are their poorer brethren. Yet, strange to say, it is a fact of experience that the well-to-do are often far less open-handed towards the Church, in proportion to their means, than the poor. While some rich person will never dream of reserving for religious purposes any portion of the spare cash he throws away upon useless extravagance or a passing fancy, poor but generous Jacks in our navy will painfully scrape together a sovereign, and send it across the seas from some distant station to further a spiritual or charitable object. The rich seem at times to forget that wealth is a gift rather than a merit and privilege—that they are the stewards, and not the irresponsible masters, of the good things with which God has blessed them above their fellows. Thus, it may happen that wealthy and fashionable people treat the claims of the Church on a level with those of their confiding tailors and dress-makers—that is, as having the last claim on their consideration, and let them wait.

Richer
folk not
always
most
generous.

Beyond the general question of support for the clergy, there are one or two developments of the principle just laid down that deserve a passing word of explanation.

Let us take first the practice of giving fees or *stipends* for certain priestly functions. What exactly is their meaning? For example, I want a priest to offer Mass for my intention, and I am expected, as a matter of course, to make the usual

Meaning
of fees to
clergy.

pecuniary offering? Is not this like paying for a spiritual thing? No! You do not, you *could* not, pay with earthly dross for what is in itself of Divine and infinite value—the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of God's own Son. You compensate the minister of Christ for his time and labour; you help to keep him in health and strength, that he may often repeat this one and only adequate act of Divine worship on your behalf. It is true that, once you have presented your offering, the priest is bound in justice to say the Mass according to your intention. But this is no business bargain, no commercial contract, by which a Mass is given *in exchange* for your gift of half a crown or five shillings, or whatever may be the amount of the stipend as fixed—not by the priest, but by his Bishop. It is for the services of the minister that you pay, not for the spiritual gift secured.

After all, men recognise this distinction in their dealings with other professional men—solicitors, barristers, and doctors. A doctor saves your life by a timely visit and happily-chosen remedy. There can be no comparison between the guinea or two that you pay him and the boon of life he has been instrumental in preserving to you. But his services call for a reward. His medical education has been costly and laborious; it was long before he could turn his training to account. Though, unlike the priest, he is free to trade if he will, and so add to his store, yet the nature of his education and attention to his professional duties

cut him off from many opportunities of gain which are open to others.

Then, again, take the case of a *dispensation* or a spiritual grant of any sort obtained from ecclesiastical authority. Certain payments are sometimes necessary. Is the money paid as the price of the spiritual favour? Not at all. But it is obvious that officials employed in ecclesiastical courts—not less than those attached to civil ones—must live, and require salaries. Their service in your interest calls for recognition.

To some, *bench-rents*, or payment for sittings in church, are an offence. ‘Am I to pay for worshipping God? Or, if too poor to pay, am I to be hindered from worship?’ The system of bench-rents will be admitted by most priests to be, at best, a necessary evil. It has, at first sight, a disagreeable look, and accordingly some spiritual pastors—all honour to them!—prefer to forego this source of support. Still, there are those who do not see their way to making such a sacrifice. Are these to be held as exacting payment for worship, or as standing in the way of the poor? Not so. Payment is never demanded as a condition *for entering a church*, or, if it were, the Bishop, on becoming aware of so detestable an abuse, would promptly stamp it out. Nevertheless, a small sum may be required as a condition *for securing a special seat*. In this case it is the convenience you pay for, and not the right of assisting at Divine worship. Moreover, it is usual to set aside a certain number of *free* seats. If you do not like to avail

Fees for dispensation.

Objection made to bench-rents.

yourself of these—either for appearance' sake, or to secure more congenial surroundings—then you pay for your self-respect and greater comfort, not for the privilege of worshipping. I do not say that a complete absence of all payments of the kind might not be preferable. All the same, considering the difficulty of maintaining Catholic churches in England, of providing for an unpaid clergy, and for the accessories of Catholic worship, it is very generally necessary for priests to rely upon these perfectly lawful sources of income. When the latter are thoughtfully and calmly considered, they will be found entirely free from any real taint of spiritual traffic.

The reward of generosity.

Of 'giving to the poor' the Scripture says that it is the same as 'lending to the Lord,' implying that the boundless generosity of God will repay with usury. Still more, surely, will Our Lord reward souls consumed, like His own, with zeal for His Father's house, and lavish in their generosity towards those who minister to them within it. The reward may not always be in kind. Indeed, one may meet cases of shattered fortunes where once there was much generosity towards the Church. Our Lord may prefer to reward such givers in that coin which the dead may carry with them, and which alone has currency in His Heavenly Kingdom—that is, in spiritual graces—the sole legal tender for the purchase of heavenly glory. He thus rewards twice over—with the spiritual blessings attached to Christ-like poverty and humiliation, besides a fuller share in the eternal joys of His Kingdom.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

No. XXI.

A. DUTIES TOWARDS HUMAN LIFE.

'Thou shalt not kill.'

THE form in which the Fifth Commandment is couched is, as you see, a *negative* one. It *prohibits*—that is to say, it tells us what we are *not* to do. We are forbidden to injure or destroy human life—either our own or that of another.¹ But since injury or death may be caused by neglect of necessary care for health and life, this precept also virtually *enjoins* something—namely, that we exercise necessary care with regard to both. Taken in this light, the Commandment is a *positive* one.

Prohibition against *harming* or *taking away* life supposes some injustice in such courses—implies a violation of some right. Hence, it is *not* contrary to the Divine command for the State to punish and execute criminals for certain crimes. Just as Almighty God gives to each human *individual* the right to defend himself against an assailant even to the point of killing him, should this be necessary for adequate defence, so a *moral* individual, such as the commonwealth, may lawfully defend itself against the attacks of evil-doers by inflicting

Capital
punish-
ment
lawful.

¹ Under murder must be classed certain criminal devices for evading the burdens of maternity. See also Vol. iii., pp. 221-6.

capital punishment. Men may differ as to the *expediency* of extreme penalties for the end in view; but the *right* cannot be questioned. Capital punishment is killing *by public authority*, and after all judicial forms have been duly observed. But, in a normal state of society, at least, it is unlawful for private individuals to take the law into their own hands, and do summary justice upon their fellows on their private authority. We find an example of such immoral methods in the popular practice of 'lynching,' adopted by infuriated mobs. This is an illegitimate usurpation of the authority of the State—an authority derived originally from God. 'For there is no power but from God.'¹

Suicide.

But God has given no power to a man to dispose even of his *own* life. *Suicide* is a wicked attack upon the inalienable dominion of God over the life He has given to His creature. This crime, oftener than not, springs from a previous act of rebellion against the Divine Will—that of refusing to put up with the trials He sees fit to send a man, or to permit. To such lengths has this spirit of revolt pervaded society in some lands, that a quarrel with parents, some small ill-usage, or some ordinary disappointment, is enough to lead mere children to commit suicide. Of this the daily press furnishes us with horrible instances. The wretched suicide either forgets, or does not believe, that the eternal pains of the next world are indefinitely more awful and intolerable than

¹ Rom. xiii. 1; see also St. John xix. 11.

those earthly ones which he or she lacks the pluck to bear.

It seems to be commonly thought nowadays that the act of self-murder is a wholly irresponsible one, and therefore guiltless. Seldom, indeed, does an English coroner's jury find *felo de se*—the legal equivalent for deliberate Suicide. In nine cases out of ten the verdict is 'suicide while in an unsound state of mind.' The idea appears to be that nothing short of sheer insanity could possibly account for a violation of that instinct of self-preservation so deeply rooted in every man's nature. Without granting the truth of this theory, let us suppose it to be true. Even then we have not disposed of the question of responsibility. It may still be asked: By what *process* of moral degeneration did the suicide come so utterly to lose his self-control, and fall into so morbid and unnatural a state of mind, as to take away his own life? The effects of some serious illness will sometimes weaken the brain. In the earlier stages of his declension there may well have been responsibility and sin. The drunkard who blasphemes in his cups may not know what he is doing *at the time*. Yet if he adverts to the fact that such insults to God are the invariable result of his drunkenness he is certainly responsible for them. He is guilty of the sinful effect *because he knowingly puts the guilty cause that produces it*, just as the dynamiter, who sets the infernal machine, is responsible for the explosion that follows later. So, too, one who has much to

Is the
suicide
respon-
sible?

suffer, and freely indulges in habits of melancholy, or of wilful rebellion against the Divine Will—who, moreover, *takes note* of a suicidal tendency in his broodings, and yet will not seek strength and patience from God in prayer or use of the Sacraments, etc.—such a one may at length come to the point of really losing all control over himself, and, under some fresh weight of sorrow, be urged by a *now* irresistible impulse to end his life. But he is hardly free from guilt. By such a process as I am describing the poor wretch may have knowingly prepared the way for the final tragedy.

Mental
relief of
confes-
sion.

As bearing upon this subject, it is worth noting that suicide is far more rare in countries, or parts of countries, where the Catholic Faith is in full possession. Nor is it difficult to see how the practice of Confession—with its unburdening of an oppressed heart in inviolable secrecy, and its fatherly words of comfort and encouragement—may, by stopping an excessive accumulation of mental pressure, serve as a safety-valve to suicidal tendencies. This, quite apart from the main object of the Sacrament, the forgiveness of sin, and its secondary purpose, an increase of God's holy grace.

St. Appol-
lonia.

A standard difficulty arises out of the martyrdom of St. Appollonia, Virgin and Martyr. She forestalled the cruelty of her executioners by leaping of her own accord into the fire prepared for her. The usual defence of this act, which at first sight is not distinguishable from suicide, is that she received a special inspiration so to act from God, the Master of life and death, and, full of an ardent

longing 'to be dissolved and to be with Christ,' eagerly obeyed the Divine intimation. Another explanation, which would still save the virgin from actual guilt of sin, might be that Appollonia, in her holy eagerness to be with God, overlooked the unlawfulness of the act from pure simplicity. 'God is wonderful in His Saints,' but not every act of His servants may be literally copied.

To deliberately hasten on another's death is as sinful as to accelerate one's own. Thus, to put the dying 'out of pain' by deliberately causing death is nothing short of *murder*. What may be an act of pity towards animals is a crime in the case of human beings. It belongs to God alone to determine the moment when man shall appear before His tribunal.

Just as a man must not of set purpose kill himself, neither is he allowed to *expose himself to risk of death* without some weighty reason. But there are higher goods than temporal life—*e.g.*, honour, chastity, the grace of God, fidelity to His truths and commandments. For these a man may lawfully despise death. The Martyrs did so, and are crowned by God with glory. But you must here notice the wide difference between *directly* seeking death and procuring it, and desiring some *higher good*, the obtainment of which will be attended with risk of life.

The woman who, to save herself from dishonour, *e.g.*, throws herself from a high window, and is killed upon the pavement below, does not commit

Putting
out of
pain.

Self-ex-
posure to
danger of
death.

A lawful
case.

suicide in the moral and Christian sense. She does not desire death—nay, she would fain avoid it, and hopes against hope that she may. What she desires and seeks, by taking the only means at hand, is to escape with her jewel untarnished, dishonour being, to her, worse than death. Nor is she doing evil that good may come. For the *immediate* outcome of her act is escape, not death. The two things are separable, and, if by a lucky chance her fall were somehow broken, they would be separated. She *endures* death rather than *procures* it.

An unlawful act to save dishonour.

Of quite a different moral complexion is an act which seemed at one time to be in contemplation. During the late Chinese crisis, when the inmates of the foreign Legations were threatened with massacre from the besieging Boxers, we were told that a husband here and there had a bullet, or other instrument of death, ready for killing his wife, in order to save her from a worse fate at the hands of the fanatical rebels. Had the occasion actually arisen, no doubt the bloody deed would have been done in all good faith—in ‘invincible ignorance.’ Yet, if the wife had been a consenting party to her direct destruction, she would really have been guilty of suicide by proxy, just as the distracted husband would have been committing murder. The means used in this hypothetical case to escape dishonour was, be it noticed, the actual infliction of death itself, and not some other preliminary act—such as a dangerous leap—from which death resulted as

a *further* consequence, and one by no means desired or intended. Besides, death in such a case would be *ineffectual* for removing danger of material dishonour; and as for any risk of *spiritual* harm, the proper remedy would be a firm trust in the grace of God—which would surely not be wanting in such dire need—and resignation to the material part of the evil as to any other temporal affliction permitted by Divine providence. On principles similar to the above, the captain of a war-ship, in time of war, is justified in blowing up his vessel, even though he run great risk of blowing himself up with it. His immediate object is to consult the good of the country he is pledged to defend—a higher good than his particular life. His act would be rightly accounted heroism—the opposite extreme pole to sin.

Short of destroying his life, a man may *notably* ^{Injury to life or health.} *injure* it or *curtail* it. How far is this lawful? A sufficiently weighty reason will justify him, provided the injury be not the object he directly aims at, and danger of death be not proximate. Unless this were so, how could thousands of merchants or professional men be excused for overtaxing their strength in pursuit of their respective occupations, and exposing themselves to some risk of nervous collapse through overstrain, or to apoplectic and paralytic seizures? Or how could the glass-blower be allowed to pursue his unhealthy trade, for he seldom makes old bones? The same may be said of a hundred other ways of living. Moreover, if people may, in view of

earthly gain, neglect consequences to health and strength, as explained above, it is still more evident that religious persons may lawfully lead an austere and penitential life for spiritual objects at similar risks. This inference, though perfectly obvious, is often overlooked by the worldly-minded. People of the kind are ready to applaud the public man's excessive brain-work, and label his contempt of risks 'self-sacrifice'; while in the case, let us say, of Carthusian and Trappist monks or Teresian nuns they make small account of complete devotion to God's service and personal sanctification, and only take note of what they deem a sinfully imprudent disregard for health, if not a senseless and unnatural fanaticism. But if the city man be guiltless, so, too, is the austere ascetic. One form of sin against the present Commandment is that of injuring one's self deliberately in order to *excite pity* or *remorse* in others, or to disable one's self for some unpleasant duty.

Duty of
caring for
one's
health.

This leads us, naturally, to consider the *positive* side of the Fifth Commandment. How far are we bound to *take care* of our life and health? Men are bound to take *ordinary* or moderate care. There is no duty to use means that are *extraordinary* or exceptional, either in themselves or in view of a person's condition of life. Thus, a person is not bound in conscience to undergo a very severe surgical operation (even where complete success is assured) to save his life, still less in order to preserve some limb or ward off a serious complaint. But in judging whether a remedy

be *extraordinary*—*i.e.*, exceptionally arduous and difficult—the great advances in surgical science and use of anæsthetics must be partly taken into account. For these diminish, at least, the value of excuses for refusing remedies based upon the horror of great pain. Nevertheless, an *excessive* repugnance to surgical methods in general might easily justify refusal, especially in the case of women. The fact that a patient's health or life is particularly important to others, or for the public good, may give rise to stricter obligations in such matters. Our present Sovereign, King Edward VII., set a brave example of devotion to this kind of duty at the time first fixed for his coronation. One cannot fix precisely the limits of duty in such cases for all in common. Each case must be examined on its own merits and in its particular circumstances, and advice should be asked.

Since man is obliged to preserve his life and health, it follows that he is bound to take the necessary *means* for this. Hence it is sinful *to refuse to work*, according to one's power, when by labour alone the necessities of life can be obtained. In his famous Encyclical on 'Labour,' our late Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., points out that labour, when necessary to provide the needs of life, is obligatory, not merely for the sake of the material comfort to be obtained, but also in order to secure that temporal happiness, intellectual development, and decency, which the natural dignity of man requires. The absence of these

Work is
obligatory
when
necessary
for life.

effects of material well-being begets that squalid and abject poverty and degradation among the poor which forms one of the crying evils of our modern society.

Injury
from in-
temper-
ance.

A word about injury to self from excess in *eating* and *drinking*. Those who run risks of *shortening* life by indulging in gluttony sin venially, except they place their lives in proximate danger, or expose themselves immediately to grave illness; for that would be *grievously* sinful. In this connection I would point out that—in the matter of intemperance in drink—a toper with ‘a steady head,’ and who ‘can always take care of himself,’ may still sin grievously by *self-injury* without so far losing his senses as to commit a mortal sin of mere intoxication. What is said of drink, in the usual sense, is equally applicable to the vicious and demoralizing *habit* of taking powerful *drugs*—a vice which seems to be making giant strides amongst women in the higher ranks of society, especially in the form of hypodermic injections.

We are
stewards
of our
lives.

In conclusion. The principle underlying the whole of this Commandment is nothing less than the fundamental truth of all religion—that is, the absolute right of dominion over His creatures possessed by God, our Creator and Lord.

As He drew us out of nothing, as all we are and have is His, clearly we are not free to dispose of ourselves according to our fancy, nor to trifle with His precious gifts. On the contrary, we are bound under pain of injustice by malversation, and of ingratitude to our Supreme Bene-

factor and loving Father, to recognise the duties and limits of our stewardship. For stewards we are, and not irresponsible masters. We should keep before our minds the day to come when a strict account will be demanded of us for the manner in which we have administered our Master's goods.

SELF-DEFENCE—DUELLING—WAR—SIN OF ANGER.

Besides the points concerning our duty to respect human life already touched upon, many others still remain which fall under the present Commandment. Of these, one or two having special reference to mothers are unsuited for discussion in a book of this kind, and are therefore passed over, in spite of their very grave importance. Some others have small practical application to my readers: these I will dismiss in a few sentences, while the remaining points must be treated at greater length, on account of their practical importance in daily life.

1. *Killing in Self-Defence.*—This is lawful provided the cause be sufficiently weighty, and certain conditions—necessary to justify such an extreme measure—be present. The legitimate *causes* usually enumerated are: defence of life, of limb, of very valuable goods, of chastity. It is unlawful, however, to inflict injury or death upon an assailant when one's reputation alone is at stake, since in civilized society other means of redress are available—*e.g.*, recourse to the law of the land.

Self-
defence.

If a thief try to rob me of sixpence (or of some other property of small value relatively to my means), I may not inflict grave injury in defence of my right—*i.e.*, to protect the sixpence. But should the thief carry his violence to extremes, I may then treat the attack as being made upon my person, and frustrate it by whatever degree of counter-violence may be necessary, even to the point of killing. I may not slay my adversary in self-defence when it is sufficient to maim him. Then, his attack upon me must be neither *prospective* nor *past*, but morally speaking *present* and *begun*. It is not necessary, however, that his first blow should have been dealt. To wait for this would usually make any measure of self-defence ineffectual on my part. If the attack be over, violence returned would no longer be an act of self-defence, but of unlawful *revenge*. For this same reason I must contemplate the injury or death of my opponent as a means of safety, not as requital of evil for evil, which would be contrary to the Gospel teaching. Yet it is not considered unlawful, *e.g.*, for a woman to box the ears of one who has already behaved rudely to her sex, though the offence be over. Such moderate chastisement may be permitted, and even commended, as a check upon renewal or aggravation of the offence.

Duels.

2. *Duelling*.—This senseless practice—exhibiting as much of *moral* cowardice as of *physical* bravery—is now, happily, obsolete in England. One need say no more about it than this: (1) That it is grievously sinful; (2) that the spiritual penalty

of excommunication is there and then incurred, not only by the combatants, but also by anyone making himself a party to 'affairs' of the kind—*i.e.*, when they are conducted with the usual formalities, so as to be really duels, and not unpremeditated fights. Pugilistic encounters are not to be classed with duels in this respect, deadly weapons not being used therein.

3. *War*.—It is sinful to engage in a war that is ^{War.} *manifestly* unjust. But it is not the duty of a private soldier or sailor to decide the extremely complex and knotty question as to whether a particular war be righteous or not—at all events, if he do not engage in it of his own free choice. Most of the conditions for fighting by lawful methods chiefly concern those in authority, whose responsibility in this matter is extremely heavy—and hence the question of war may be passed over as not being of general application.

Now to deal somewhat more fully with a few ^{Sin of} remaining questions of some moment. According ^{anger.} to our Catechism, the sin of *anger* is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment. The reason of its being thus included is that excessive indulgence of this passion often leads to murder, or at least to physical violence and injury. Murder is the logical conclusion of anger. For anger is a passion which rouses a man to contend vigorously against some obstacle in his way which can be removed only with difficulty. Thus, for example, a person who is very angry at not being able to

get out of a room may kick the door to pieces—to remove the obstacle. Hence, when vehemently excited, anger inclines towards the destruction or annihilation of the obstacle. If the latter happen to be a human being, it tends towards murder, as constant experience proves.

Moder-
ated anger
sometimes
lawful.

But anger is not *always* sinful, as St. Paul reminds us in the words: 'Be angry and sin not.' The sin lies in *excess*, or else, though less commonly, in *defect*. This is the case with other virtues. Hence the adage, *In medio stat virtus*, or, 'Virtue is the mean between two extremes.' Thus, for instance, hope is the mean between the extremes of despair and presumption—too little hope and unwarranted hope. Again, infidelity is *defect* of faith—superstition, *excess* of it. We have, perhaps, an example of duly moderated anger or rightful indignation in the case of Our Blessed Lord, when, on fire with zeal for 'His Father's house,' He made 'a scourge of little cords,' and drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple.¹ The Saints of God have exhibited anger at great outrages committed against the Divine Majesty. Parents, too, may at times be rightly moved to anger at gross ill-treatment from their children.

Revenge.

From anger proceeds the sin of *revenge*. To constitute a grave sin in this matter the evil desired or inflicted must itself be grave. Thus, it is grievously wrong to wish (seriously) that people may die, or may suffer some grievous spiritual or temporal loss or injury.

¹ St. John ii. 15-17.

A few words must be said upon the subject of *forgiveness of injuries*. This Christian duty is among the most bitter and difficult to poor human nature. Yet the teaching of Christ is clear and trenchant: 'Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you.'¹ And in the parable of the forgiven but unforgiving servant, who was punished, our Lord declares: 'So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.'² But He 'who knew what there was in man' knew how hard to human pride was the practice of forgiveness. So He went out of His way to give us a most heroic example of meekness upon the Cross: 'Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do.'

The duty of forgiveness.

Where we look in vain for excuse, the charity of His Heart found some: and the fact that He, Who so magnanimously pardoned His cruel tormentors and revilers, was Very God at once scatters to the winds each ingenious plea which human nature devises for nursing grievances and for escaping the soul-harrowing ordeal of forgiveness—*e.g.*, 'His conduct towards me is all wrong from beginning to end; I have been treated most unjustly.' And was not the Passion one hideous travesty of justice? and was He not wrongfully treated, even as a *man*, letting alone that He was the Infinite God? 'I never harmed *him*; why should he injure me?' Of our Lord, 'Who went about doing good' to all,³ the same can be said, only far more truly. As the penitent thief pleaded for Him on

Christ refutes pleas for revenge.

¹ St. Matt. v. 44. ² St. Matt. xviii. 35. ³ Acts x. 38.

the Cross, 'This man, what evil hath he done?' Again: 'It was not *I* that *began* the quarrel.' Well, was it God or man that first brought sin into the world and opened up the breach between the Creator and His creatures? And yet God forgives man. 'Well, I don't think it's my place to make the first advance, or to take the first step towards making friends. She is younger than I; besides, my position entitled me to more respectful treatment,' etc. Yet if God had not taken the first step towards reconciling fallen man—the step which brought Him from Heaven to the comfortless manger, and thence to the shameful Cross—where should I be? And even now, after all He has done and suffered for my soul, when I commit grievous sin against Him, who is it that makes the first advance towards friendship—the greater personage or the lesser, the offended or the offender? God takes the first step, and necessarily. For without the desire of repentance I could never repent, and God alone can give that first grace, moving my heart to penance. If He did not give it in His sweet mercy, reprobate I should be, and reprobate I should remain for ever. For by ourselves, and without the Holy Ghost, my friends, we cannot so much as profitably say: 'The Lord Jesus.'¹

'I hate
him.'
Unreason-
ing dis-
likes.

What is to be thought of the expression: 'Oh, I *hate* him!' (Perhaps, more often, both subject and object in this sentence owns the feminine gender.) Few things are harder to explain than

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

the intense natural antipathy and dislike subsisting between one person and another. Just as there is love 'at first sight,' so is there dislike, and the antipathy is very commonly mutual. The curious part of it is that usually neither party can allege any shred of a reason for it. A tone in the voice, the shape of the nose, or the colour of the hair, suffices for mortal enmity. It is the old story :

'I do not love thee, Dr. Fell ;
The reason why I cannot tell.'

There being no reason in this mental poison, it follows that reasoning about it will prove, on the whole, an ineffectual antidote. Now, what is the *moral* significance of such aversions? No doubt the expression 'I hate,' just as the phrase 'I love,' especially with women, is only an exaggerated form of expressing a strong natural feeling, and both utterances may be largely discounted. In so far as the dislike may be *invincible*, the feeling cannot *of itself* amount to a sin. Still, it must be kept steadily under control, or it will quickly lead to manifestations that *are* sinful—*e.g.*, rash judgments, detractions, uncharitable fault-finding, jealousies, spites, etc. Even from a natural point of view self-restraint is necessary. For such antipathies, if constantly yielded to, will increase and multiply surprisingly, and we shall end by being unable to live in decent peace with our fellow-men. We shall find ourselves continually at loggerheads with our surroundings, and, like the fretful porcupine, erect our bristles at the slightest provoca-

How far
sinful.

tion. A very different matter is hatred gradually developed in the heart by freely-indulged passion, or lit up suddenly by some injury done us. Here we have to bring all our spiritual batteries to bear in order to rout the demon of hate. If the wrong done us be undoubted, we cannot love—indeed, we ought not to love—the wrong itself; yet, that we may be ‘children of our Father Who is in Heaven,’ we must needs stop short of hating the person of the wrong-doer. God hates *sin*, but not the person of the sinner; indeed, it is written that ‘He hateth nothing that He hath made.’ With the image of the Crucified before our eyes, let us strive to follow our all-forgiving God.

No. XXII.

B. DUTIES TOWARDS THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE.

OUR Catechism includes under offences against the Fifth Commandment 'giving scandal and bad example.' Why so? Because both lead to *spiritual* injury or death. If it be unlawful to injure or destroy the life of the body, it must be still more wicked to cause injury or spiritual death to souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of Our Saviour. This is the sin of *scandal*—a word often used popularly in quite a different sense to the one under consideration.

Our 'dailies' abound in scandals—turf scandals, workhouse scandals, military scandals, and so on—by which is meant sensational incidents bearing an unpleasant look and causing disturbance, astonishment, excitement. Sin may sometimes be involved in such occurrences, yet it is not so much from this point of view that they are headed 'scandals.' Again, 'talking *scandal*' generally means gossip, backbiting, etc. The expression 'He scandalized me' is used by some for 'He spoke against my character,' which is *calumny* or else *detraction*, or 'He abused me to my face,' which is *contumely*. The theological meaning of *scandal* is, 'Any external act of mine which occasions sin (mortal or venial) in another'—any act

Worse
than *bodily*
injury.

Meaning
of scandal

having a *lowering effect* upon the virtue of others, disposing them to sin. Its essence lies not in the mere shock given to the moral system, but in the weakness following upon the shock.

Gravity of
this sin.

The frequency of the sin of scandal, and the fearful havoc among souls which it creates, suffices to prove the importance of instruction on the point. Our Lord warns us how widespread is this sin when He cries out: 'Woe to the world because of scandals! It is necessary' (*i.e.*, men being what they are) 'that scandals should come, yet woe to him through whom the scandal cometh!' And then He further expresses His horror of such soul-murder by declaring: 'It were better for a man to have a millstone tied round his neck, and that he should be cast into the depth of the sea, than that he should scandalize the least of these My little ones.'¹

Kinds of
scandal.

There are *various kinds* of scandal—*direct*, *indirect*, and *diabolical*—as it is called. The differences between them spring from the different attitude of mind in the scandal-giver towards the spiritual injury he occasions.

Thus, if I want sin committed—for my pleasure, or gain, or some other private end—the scandal is *direct*. The end immediately in view is the sin. But if what I really want is not the sin, but something which I know will, in all likelihood, *lead* to another's sinning, the scandal is *indirect*. Here I only desire spiritual injury in a roundabout way—*i.e.*, by wanting that which will probably cause it.

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 7.

Thus, to egg a man on to drink, to speak or act improperly in order to bend resisting virtue to one's depraved will, are cases of *direct* scandal. To leave the key of my wine-cellar in charge of a drunken servant is *indirect* scandal, leading to drunkenness, and through that tendency to theft. Other examples of indirect scandal would be selling irreligious or obscene books for gain; eating meat on Fridays before those who would be influenced by my laxity, or, if non-Catholics, who would form a poor idea of the Catholic religion from my disregard for its precepts; or making it hard for servants to get to Mass on Sundays and *holidays of obligation*, etc. To constitute *diabolical* scandal my purpose must be to produce sin in another *for badness' sake*, and not merely on account of some profit to myself. Take the case of an apostate Catholic striving to pervert the faith of others in order to make them as bad as himself. No need to say that this is 'devilish.'

In order, however, to distinguish between what is sinful and what is not in the present matter, we must bear in mind one or two principles. Notice it is not necessary, for guilt, that the sin of another should *actually follow* from my act (or omission), still less that I should *know* it has followed. It is enough that I knew at the time of acting that my act was *calculated* to cause the sin. In other words, scandal may be sinfully *given*, and yet not actually *taken*. This may happen through the *unlooked-for* firmness of the other party's virtue. On the contrary, if the provocation to sin be given

Condi-
tions for
guilt.

as a kind of vain experiment for trying virtue that will probably stand firm, there will be no proper scandal. But there would still be grievous sin *if success were wished for*, although hardly expected—a sin of *desire*, but not of scandal. Then, just as scandal may be given, but not taken, so may it be *taken* when not really *given*. This occurs in what is called *Pharisaical* scandal, and also in scandal given to the *weak*: that is, either weak in *virtue* or weak in *knowledge*—ignorant, in fact.

Pharisaic
scandal.

Taking scandal at trifles or at things perfectly lawful is a very common failing among 'pious' people, and supplies an unfailing fund of gossip and backbiting. To such scandal, taken without cause, a man need pay no heed whatever. If anyone chooses to be shocked because I play a game or take a photograph on Sundays, or, being himself a teetotaler, is shocked at my drinking alcoholic liquors in moderation, or at my sitting down during a part of Benediction from fatigue or infirmity—well, that's his affair.

Scandal to
the weak.

Nevertheless, I must in charity consider the weaker brethren, especially when there is an appearance of serious wrong in my conduct. For example, it may be necessary, and hence quite lawful, to do some servile work on a Sunday or holiday; but it had best either be done privately or else I ought to let people know that there is good reason for it. And even if my explanation happen to be a wrong one, yet the fact of my giving it removes all appearance of disregard for the laws of the Church. Grown-up people or

professional men may sometimes lawfully talk amongst themselves on certain topics which would scandalize the young or ignorant. They should refrain from such conversation in such company. The same principle applies to the reckless habit of leaving any and every sort of book, newspaper, magazine, or illustration, lying about promiscuously where young people or servants can readily pick them up. One cannot say, 'There is really no harm in them, so I need not bother.' Neither is there harm in a loaded pistol or a razor, but I should not leave these within the reach of children or lunatics or those who did not understand their use.

Another principle. For incurring the guilt of scandal the spiritual harm done must follow as the genuine *result* of my action, not from the personal depravity or habitual practices of others. Thus, children who by *trivial* acts of disobedience provoke passionate and irreligious parents to curses and blasphemies are not really responsible for this result. The provocation being so slight, such violent parental outbursts must rather be attributed to the *uncontrolled passions of their elders*. Similarly, the use of bad language before those much given to it, or accustomed to hearing it, will not cause any particular scandal. The advice once given by a priest to a navy captain recently received into the Church, who scrupled to continue the practice of swearing at his men, but felt they would hardly heed an order that was not stiffened with oaths, was framed upon the above

Respons-
sibility for
scandal.
Various
examples.

principle. He advised the convert to shout out with much emphasis and vehement gestures a certain full-sounding and well-known line of Greek poetry from Homer. Thus he would avoid the sin of using profane oaths, while the fact of his *seeming* to swear, and that terribly, caused no disedification to speak of. On the other hand, when a person's position or duties require of him a good example, he may give scandal where another would not. What would not scandalize in an ordinary layman might be scandalous in a priest or religious, in a parent or a teacher.

With regard to *indirect* scandal, it does not follow that I am bound to forego an action, otherwise lawful, simply because I foresee someone will probably take occasion from it to sin. This is specially true where a sacrifice of my liberty would prove a considerable inconvenience or cause a notable loss.

Scandal
in dress.

Thus, in the matter of dress, a woman is not bound to make a fright of herself because, if prettily dressed, some people may turn her comeliness to evil purposes. Here, of course, I am taking for granted that strict attention be paid to genuine Catholic ideas of modesty in apparel, a virtue by no means universally practised by night, or even by day. Those who adopt the most venturesome thing 'out,' in the matter of Paris fashions, have much cause to examine their consciences. So-and-so may own a title or be a rich heiress; she may be regarded as the pink of fashion, and move 'in the very highest Catholic

circles, you know'; for all that, no heavenly commission has been given her to start a new interpretation of the Sixth Commandment. Her ingenuity, therefore, in turning the primeval purpose of clothes upside down is no safe standard to go by. The cynical French statesman who declared the object of dressing thoughts in words to be concealment of the former would have been right had he referred to the clothing of the body.

The publican also has no duty to retire from his trade for the reason that some of his customers choose to get drunk on the premises, on account of the serious loss such a step would entail. Neither, for a similar reason, does he commit scandal by selling more liquor to one who has already taken as much as is good for him, since the handing of drink across the counter is not in itself a part of the sin of drunkenness. That sin must be imputed to the vicious determination of the drunkard. Still, our publican may not *entice* the man to drink more for the sake of profit—say, by tampering with the liquor so as to increase his thirst, or offering a reduction on the quantity, or commending to his maudlin notice some choice 'tap' as yet untasted.

Publicans,

Now, it may be asked: How is one to tell whether a sin of scandal be mortal or venial? The following may serve as a general rule. If the sin caused be mortal, the scandal causing it is mortal; if venial, venial—always supposing, in the case of mortal injury to the soul, that the

Rules for deciding guilt.

scandal-giver adverts at the time to the gravity of the case. Thus, to occasion murder would be a *mortal* sin of scandal, while to drive a pupil into telling lies of excuse by over severe cross-examination would be *venially* sinful.

As to the duty of expressly *mentioning scandal*, in confession as a *separate sin*, this will depend upon circumstances. Some sins are by nature scandalous—those which necessarily imply the presence or co-operation of a second person—such as scandal given in conversation. In such cases there is no need to mention the scandal, since it is evident to the confessor. Sometimes, however, the character of the scandal-giver may need to be stated because materially altering the kind of sin. A priest who argues against an article of faith with a *fellow-priest*, for discussion's sake, will hardly give scandal, since such academic disputes form part of a priest's previous training. But done *before recent converts* it might cause them to doubt or to fall away from the faith. So, also, a woman who talks to a young, newly-married wife so as to set her against her duties towards her husband may give grave scandal and completely wreck married happiness; while if she were to speak in the same strain to her own mother, probably no harm would be done.

Bad
example.

I have said nothing about *bad example* as differing from *scandal*. There is a distinction to be drawn. All bad example is practically scandal, yet not all scandal is, strictly speaking, bad example. It is characteristic of the latter to dis-

pose one's neighbour to commit the *same* fault as myself. Human nature leans towards imitation. Thus, the Catholic who sinfully gets married at a registrar's office, because the other party will not submit to Catholic rules for marriage, inclines other weak-kneed Catholics to seek a like guilty way out of their difficulties. Well-to-do Catholic parents who send their boys to non-Catholic public schools thereby set a pernicious fashion to other parents of like worldliness. These are instances of *bad example*. On the other hand, a Catholic who by unkindly treating a would-be convert puts him off from embracing the known truth gives scandal. For there is no imitation here; there is no likeness of nature between the uncharitableness and its result, heresy.

One thought alone should suffice to fill us with a holy dread of giving scandal—viz., that the *damage* we do is *incalculable*. By sinning grievously on our own account we indeed destroy our own souls. It is a spiritual suicide. Still, we at least know, for the most part, how far the evil has gone, and with God's grace can remedy it. Not so when we have led others into sin, particularly if hitherto their lives have been innocent. We start a soul upon the downward grade, and can never know how low we cause another to fall, perhaps never fully to rise again. We have infected one more soul with the epidemic of sin, and are powerless to check its further spread from a new centre to many others. For example, what a bitter thought it must be for one who has

Evil of
scandal
incalculable.

to repent of circulating corrupt literature, that the effects of his sin may increase and multiply long after he has gone to his account! The stone is cast, and, once out of the hand, it may break a head or a window, or else fall harmlessly to the earth; whichever it may be, the thrower can no longer control it. And yet—mystery of infinite compassion!—the soul-murderer shall infallibly be pardoned upon doing penance, though the poor penitent may have no other means of reparation than earnest prayer for the conversion of the souls he may have injured. Whatever else we may do, never let us help Satan to rob the Sacred Heart of the fruits of its bitter Passion. In this way, at least, we can every one of us promote the interests of that Divine Heart.

THE SIXTH AND NINTH COMMANDMENTS.

No. XXIII.

DUTIES TOWARDS MARRIAGE, THE SOURCE OF HUMAN LIFE.

'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'

'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.'

I WISH there were no need to deal with the above precepts, even with that reserve which their nature necessarily imposes upon me. Unfortunately, that which the Word of God calls 'the concupiscence of the flesh' has so strong a hold upon man's poor fallen nature, and so often beguiles the most innocent hearts, that no course of instructions on the Decalogue would be substantially faithful without some reference to the unwelcome topic. The need of alluding to it is the more forced upon the mind when one finds so weighty a doctor of morality and such an experienced spiritual guide as St. Alphonsus Liguori giving it as his serious opinion that the vast majority of lost souls have been condemned—at least inclusively—for sins of the flesh.¹

¹ Of course—saving some unknown private revelation made to the Saint—the above can only be an *opinion* or conjecture. Moreover, those prone to discouragement on account of past sin should notice that Liguori's view is not equivalent to saying that the vast majority of those who have sinned in this way are lost for ever—a very different statement.

Yet any reference to this subject must obviously be guarded, and, moreover, couched in terms befitting Christian modesty. My readers need have no fear that their sense of delicacy will be offended by any unnecessary plainness. I shall, in fact, do little more than explain some general principles. Speaking in general, in these two Commandments God puts a check upon the various forms of sinful indulgence of sensual passion—or, rather, for the most part, He merely enforces with greater clearness the *natural* law written in the heart of every rational creature, yet in some points not so clearly written as to be easily read by all without further enlightenment from Him.

The Sixth Commandment forbids the *actual commission* of sin, while the Ninth goes further and restrains the sinful *desire*. A particular and extreme form of sin is expressly singled out for condemnation, both on its own account and as representing a whole class of offences—viz., those contrary to the holy virtue of purity or chastity.

Sanctity
of Christian mar-
riage.

To say a few words about the Sixth Commandment. It protects the sanctity of Christian marriage, and prohibits unfaithfulness of the worst type to 'marriage vows.' In order to see the grounds of this prohibition, we must recall the leading features of marriage under the Christian dispensation. Matrimony is not merely a human contract. It is that, but much more. It is a Sacrament—one of the seven instruments of grace instituted by Christ for the sanctification of souls through the merits of His Precious Blood. Thus,

marriage is a holy thing, and the Church, as the appointed guardian and dispenser of the mysteries of God,¹ claims the exclusive right to declare what are the conditions for constituting a true and valid marriage in the sight of God. The only part which the State can play in the matter is to fix the legal conditions for the temporal effects of marriage—with regard to inheritance, division of property, and the like.

The civil power cannot so much as touch the bond of marriage itself, the essence and substance of the union between Christian man and wife. Marriage, then, is a thing of God, and not of Cæsar, a sacred tie cemented by the Blood of Our Saviour. Any attempt to tamper with it must be met by a faithful Church with the warning: 'Hands off!' There are, moreover, two chief properties of Christian matrimony to be noticed—*unity* and *indissolubility*. Even 'from the beginning,' as Our Lord told the Pharisees,² God willed that a man should have but one wife, and a woman but *one* husband—that is, as long as *both* lived. Through an abuse, not sanctioned by Moses, but tolerated on account of their 'hardness of heart,' the Jews adopted the custom of repudiating their wives and taking fresh ones, the divorced parties being thenceforth held free to remarry. But Our Lord clearly condemned this practice as *the sin of adultery*, already forbidden by the Decalogue. Thus, once marriage has taken place and been confirmed by the parties living together as man

Total
divorce
sinful and
invalid.

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

² St. Matt. xix. 8.

and wife, nothing but the death of one or other of them can dissolve the bond and set either of them free to marry again. So, in the eyes of Catholics, 'divorced' persons who marry again are not living in lawful wedlock, but in sin; and their offspring is regarded as really illegitimate, whatever the civil law may say to the contrary. The law of England and that of other countries whose legislation on marriage no longer goes upon Catholic lines admits of divorce for certain causes, and recognises the new marriages that often follow. But this is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament, which uniformly condemns such unions.

The Bible
and
divorce.

Thus, in the Gospels Our Lord repeatedly declares him to be an adulterer who weds a woman that has been 'put away'—a clear proof that she is still bound to the man who dismissed her. The text from St. Matthew,¹ in which superficial readers fancy they find an exception to this general forbiddance, does not really contain one. This becomes clear when allowance is made for the peculiar Hebrew construction of the somewhat perplexing sentence, and still more plain when the passage is compared with another from the very same Evangelist,² and with several other texts, all of them condemning divorce from the bond of marriage. Hence Rome has never sanctioned the parting of those whom God hath joined together in a fully completed Christian marriage, nor have lynx-eyed opponents ever been able to produce an

¹ St. Matt. v. 32.

² St. Matt. xix. 8.

authentic instance of this.¹ Had the Holy See been ready—in the sixteenth century—thus to profane the Sacrament of Matrimony for the sake of preventing a schism, probably Henry VIII., of uxorious memory, would never have torn England away from its allegiance to the Pope. On the other side, we have the well-known example of the first Protestant Reformers—advocates of the ‘pure Gospel’—granting a signed permit for bigamy to Philip of Hesse, for reasons of expediency—a *real* instance, surely, of making the end justify essentially sinful means. A married person being thus bound exclusively to his or her partner in life, it follows that for such a one to indulge in sensual passion towards others, or for others to indulge it towards the married person, is a sin against the Commandments.²

I said above that the offence singled out by these two Commandments represented a whole class of sins against purity. Hence Catholic theologians include under one or other of the two precepts those other various kinds of sensual sin—in thought, desire, word, or deed—to which poor human nature is prone. And there is no need to explain how these are, so to say, preliminaries to still greater sins, such as the one expressly mentioned. The worse sins being forbidden, the other offences that prepare the way for them are forbidden also.

¹ I am speaking here, not of judicial *separation*, but of full release from the bond of marriage.

² For fuller treatment see Appendix A, ‘New Testament and Divorce,’ p. 382.

The Ninth
Com-
mand-
ment.
Morality
must be
interior.

The Ninth Commandment, as we have seen, prohibits not merely the sin, but the desire of it. 'Thou shalt not covet,' etc. This leads us to an important feature of Catholic moral teaching. The Catholic faith demands the sanctification of the *whole* man in mind and heart, and not in outward conduct only. Such is Christ's own teaching. He gives us as the 'first and greatest' Commandment: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy *whole heart*, and with thy *whole soul*, and with thy *whole mind*.'¹ And elsewhere He says that in order to love Him we must 'keep the commandments.' Consequently we must keep them inwardly in our heart and mind, as well as outwardly.

White-
washed
sepul-
chres.
Cynicism.

Mere external morality belongs to the defective 'justice of the Pharisees,' whom our Saviour likened to whitewashed sepulchres, which without are fair and comely to behold, but *within* are full of corruption²—a true picture of a Christian man or woman who draws the line at scandalous *conduct*, or at least has not committed the world's unpardonable sin of 'being found out,' but who is inwardly, or at least secretly, a prey to unlawful lust. There is need to insist upon this *interior* keeping of the two Commandments under examination. For public opinion around us, though on the whole fairly solicitous for outward decency, pays a good deal less heed to the *inward*. In youth and vigorous early manhood it hardly expects such purity of heart to exist—regards it

¹ St. Matt. xxii. 37.

² St. Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.

on the whole as impracticable. Accordingly, it hides the shame under the playful names it assigns to youthful irregularities. A widespread cynicism disbelieves utterly in the inward virtue of woman-kind as a class, crediting the sex at most with virtuous appearances assumed according to circumstances. Our works of fiction at times reveal the same attitude of mind. Thus, for one example, in a society novel from a woman's pen, the reader's sympathy is powerfully enlisted in behalf of the heroine, a married woman, who no longer loves her lawful husband, and transfers her affections passionately to another. But simply because she is able by a supreme effort to stop short of gross misconduct the reader is virtually invited to admire her purity! This is sheer immorality in the guise of heroic self-sacrifice. She had already 'sinned in her heart.'

The heart of man is the real seat of human sin, as Our Lord teaches us in several places. The guilt of sin lies radically in *the will to commit it*; and this leads us to another important principle.

Three conditions for a sin.

In order to incur the guilt of sin against these, or any of the other Commandments, there must be *consent of the will* to the temptation—*full* consent for *mortal*, and *partial* consent (or weak resistance of the will) for *venial* sin. If there be neither degree of consent, there can be no sin. The distinction sometimes made between *deliberate* sins and *not deliberate* comes from a confusion of ideas. For the smallest venial sin there must be *some* deliberation, however slight. In ordinary ques-

tions of right and wrong three conditions are required in order to constitute a mortal sin. (1) The subject-matter must be *grave* or *serious*, whether it be a thought, a word, or a deed, or an omission of what is commanded; (2) there must be *knowledge* of the wrongfulness and *advertence* to the same *at the time* of acting; and (3) there must be *full* consent of the will to the wrong.

Now, in the case of offences against purity the subject-matter is *always* grave, and hence, as far as this condition goes, the sin would always be *mortal*. If, then, the offender be excused from grievous sin, it must be because one or other of the two remaining conditions is wanting—that is, either knowledge and advertence, or fulness of consent. There may easily be want of knowledge as to the sinfulness of things, or at all events of their *gravity*, especially in children or very young people, whether we call it innocence or ignorance. But in the case of all persons absence of *full* consent will frequently save from mortal guilt. Guilt before God is a question of the *will*, and not of *feelings*. Even with the best, feelings may be powerfully wrought upon by violent or repeated temptations for which they are in no way responsible. The biographies of canonized saints prove this. St. Paul, St. Benedict, St. Catherine of Genoa, are cases in point, not to mention others. Gratification *freely indulged*—and not simply *experienced*, through human weakness—is what introduces guilt.

Court-
ship.

We have seen already that the Commandments

under discussion, besides condemning the violation of marriage, also prohibit other forms of sensual excess. This applies even to those who are going through the phase of 'courting' or 'company-keeping.' There is no special exemption from the Commandments for such, nor for those actually engaged to be married. But in the case of the last-named, ordinary signs of affection—exhibited with moderation and self-restraint—are not to be universally condemned as sinful, still less as grievously wrong. Perhaps a fair test of lawfulness might be this: whether the acts of affection are such as right-minded people would not deem unbecoming or extravagant between brother and sister.

In all such matters, however, right and wrong must be judged *relatively* to the individual characters of the parties concerned, and not in the abstract. Often, when a priest is asked, Is this or that wrong? he is obliged to reply with another question, Do *you* find any harm in it? If so, avoid it, or take such spiritual precautions as will remove any immediate danger. The same rule will decide some other doubts connected with the present subject—*e.g.*, Is it wrong for me to go to theatres, music-halls, or to such and such a play? to dance such and such dances at balls? to read such and such a book? One cannot always give a direct answer. Neither play, nor dance, nor book may be manifestly wrong in itself. The morality will depend upon the effect produced in the individual questioner, unless, indeed, there be

'Is there any harm in it?'
Individual character to be considered.

scandal to others involved. For scandal there may be, although the questioner derive no moral harm himself. This may happen in the case of certain kinds of modern plays, such as one is sometimes surprised to find 'good' Catholics attending, perhaps to the knowledge of those who will see them next morning at the Communion-rails.

Confes-
sion of
sensual
sin.

Something remains to be said about *confession* of sins against the present Commandments. Here, as in the case of other faults, the *degree of clearness* in self-accusation required may be set down thus: The penitent should so far explain himself as to enable an averagely intelligent confessor to understand the precise *kind* of sin committed, and so prevent the mutually disagreeable necessity of cross-questioning. In the present matter the confessor is bound to know the kind of *sensual* sin. Thus, evil *thoughts* are different to *words*, which, besides being wrong, may do harm to others. Mere thoughts, again, differ from desires of a practical kind, or actions, and so on. But it is to be most carefully observed that *detailed* explanation *within* a particular kind of sensual sin is neither necessary nor would be permitted by the confessor. Both reverence to the Sacrament of Penance and due regard for Christian modesty forbid this. Hence the axiom: 'Holy things must be treated holily.' There are, however, some *circumstances* of sins that completely alter their *kind*, and therefore need to be stated, as, for instance, (sometimes) the sex of the person sinned against, the existence of marriage ties—relationship, either

by blood or through marriage—consecration to God, either by the Sacrament of Orders or by vows without Orders.

A few words, too, may be useful for meeting a common objection against confession of sins of the present kind, as being unseemly, improper, indiscreet, etc., especially in the case of female penitents. To Catholics, if such an objection should be felt by one here or there, the reply is simple. You have no option in the matter. ‘Prudence is the virtue of him who commands rather than of him who obeys.’ The Catholic Church, which you know to be infallible in morals as well as in faith, teaches that it is a law of Christ (not of the Pope, nor of priests—who, as mere delegates, are bound to minister according to Christ’s conditions)—that *all* mortal sins must be confessed, whatever be their kind, as a condition for receiving His pardon. Such is the will of Our Lord, and therefore it can involve no possible departure from *perfect* propriety and prudence. He knew all things, and hence realized quite perfectly how His own law of Confession would work out, and how it would affect both sexes and every individual soul.

To the non-Catholic—who does not admit the infallibility of Catholic moral teaching, but may be ready, nevertheless, to consider Confession on its own merits—one might, perhaps, explain thus: Catholics believe firmly that Confession was instituted by Our Lord for healing the soul’s diseases. To be healed, the disease must be revealed. When

Objections to such confession dealt with.

people are anxious about their *bodily* health, they speak plainly enough to the physician, and wish him to understand exactly what is wrong with them, yet, no doubt, expressing themselves with as much delicacy as the needs of the case allow. No one accuses such patients of impropriety, nor the physician either; and yet, however upright the latter may be, a consulting-room does not afford quite the same safeguards as the confessional-box. There the treatment is spiritual, not material, and, besides, there is the sacred character of the priest and the special moral training to which the Catholic Church subjects all candidates for the priesthood.

There would be little use in telling a doctor: 'I have pains: heal me.' He will want to know a good deal more than such a generality conveys, in order to *diagnose* the disease and select the proper remedy. In point of fact, the confessor needs far *less detailed* knowledge for curing the soul than the physician requires for healing the body.

No. XXIV.

SAFEGUARDS TO HOLY PURITY.

WHEN Our Saviour went for comfort to His disciples in the Garden of Olives, and found them sleeping 'for sadness,' He gave them this warning: 'Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, *but the flesh weak.*'¹ Two recommendations for strengthening our weakness in the hour of temptation: Care and Prayer. Both are necessary for safety. Prudence and watchfulness will prevent needless temptation, by causing us to avoid the *occasions* of sin; but prayer—under which term I include all the means of grace—Mass, Sacraments, and the rest—is needed to obtain for us strength to resist, however strongly, basely, or frequently we be tempted. Half the battle lies in realizing that neither mere *natural* human effort, nor a *natural pride of character* which despises baseness, will long avail to keep us proof against our lower passions. Do we not say that 'pride goes before a fall'? The help of God, then, is indispensable for victory, and must be earnestly invoked. But, on the other hand, all the means of grace we may use will not keep us pure if we court danger and neglect ordinary precautions.

It is possible, however, to watch too keenly, to

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 41.

Reason-
able care.

be too *anxiously* careful. A scrupulous, nervous, fidgety forecasting of danger to come weakens rather than strengthens us for the moment of temptation. By anticipating the trouble a soul may often manufacture numberless temptations which otherwise would never have occurred. Confidence, therefore, in God—not in our own strength, which is, in truth, weakness—must accompany both our care and our prayer.

Care
before
tempta-
tion.

The favourable issue of temptation depends far more upon our behaviour before its arrival than upon our conduct when actually present. This is, perhaps, specially true in temptations of a fleshly kind. Let us, however, steer clear of a mistake in this matter. Our *guilt* depends finally upon the consent of our will *at the time of being tempted*. Previous carelessness, though it may by rights have *merited* for us a fall, is no proof of *itself* that we have fallen. That depends upon the answer to this question: 'Did I yield to the evil suggestions of my lower nature, or did I not?' Still less does the fact that I omitted to pray *while temptation was upon me* prove that I gave way to it: while the fact of praying forms a strong presumption that I did *not*.

Different
charac-
ters.

Some may derive great help from prayer at the time; others may find that this direct way of driving back the enemy only fixes their attention the more upon the temptation, and so adds to its force. They succeed better by taking as little notice of the suggestion as possible—treating it with the Christian contempt which its baseness

deserves, and distracting their mind by some new interest or occupation. This device is like 'talking about the weather' by way of changing a disagreeable subject of conversation. It is an error to despise the use of *natural* means, and even motives, for dodging our spiritual foes. If reading a book or newspaper, tackling some job, or any other lawful device rids us of the trouble, by all means let us use it.

Some one on reading this may think: 'Are you not now contradicting what you said above? You said mere natural effort, without prayer, would not help me. *Now* you recommend human "dodges," and say I am not obliged to pray!' Not so; I only say that perhaps you, or another, when tempted, may find it better not to pray *at the time* of temptation. I refer, of course, chiefly to those who do pray and employ other spiritual means at *other* times—if not always with desirable regularity and fervour. By hearing Mass—unless prevented—by going to Confession and Holy Communion, say once a month or thereabouts, or else when the opportunity serves, a man is continually storing up grace and strength against the time of trial.

But a person who seldom prays at all, and never heartily, and who, moreover, has no sort of recourse to God when tempted, is likely, doubtless, to fall. Yet even in his case sin depends upon whether he actually yielded *at the time of temptation*. When upon examining his conscience a man has grave doubts as to having come off best in the fight,

An objection met.

then indeed he has little to judge by except antecedent likelihood—such as whether he used spiritual aids, and took precautions beforehand, or whether in the past he has, as a rule, clearly fallen into sin under similar circumstances.

Recourse to God, then, in our prayers is the first necessary safeguard. I place the Sacraments second, not as being less effectual, but because all have not the same opportunities of getting them; *e.g.*, sailors, or those living many miles from a Catholic church—while no one can truly say, ‘I cannot pray.’

Sacra-
ments a
powerful
safeguard. There is no means more infallible for subduing a strong passion than approaching the Sacraments *regularly*—I do not insist so much on great frequency—and *earnestly*. I do not say with great *sensible* comfort, or feeling.

Be it known to all and sundry that the effect of Sacraments *does not depend upon feelings*: there is a nucleus of grace which they are bound to give of their own force, provided we put the required conditions for their reception.

Confes-
sion. The use of the Sacrament of Penance as a remedy for sensual passion will, no doubt, entail no small cost to human nature. Human respect, if it does not prevail upon a man to make bad and insincere confessions by concealing grievous sin, may urge him to put off confessing indefinitely. How very natural! And, truth to say, but for Christ’s precept no one would be bound thus to defame himself even to a fellow-creature pledged, as the priest is, to inviolable secrecy.

What can I say to sweeten the bitter act of humiliation? I have already touched upon this point in the preceding letter. Let me now add something more. First of all, the penitent must try to realize *the true position and attitude of mind and heart* of the confessor. In a sense he is a spiritual *Judge* hearing the cause of sin, weighing the dispositions of the self-accuser and pronouncing in Christ's name the sentence of absolution, or—*very rarely*—deferring it, according as he finds the penitent truly penitent or the contrary.

But, besides, the priest is also a *Father*; and by no means faithful to his divinely-imposed duty would that priest be who forgot this gentler aspect of his sacred office. He is bound to imitate the tenderness, delicacy, and generous treatment of his model, the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son,¹ whom our Lord presents to us as a type of Himself. That parent, far from despising or harshly upbraiding his profligate son, *went out to meet him* uttering no word of reproach, spared him all needless humiliation, fell upon his neck and kissed him, bade the best of everything to be brought for him, and put him back into his former position, rejoicing. This is the ideal, and I think those who practise confession in the true Church will grant that, upon the whole, Catholic confessors are faithful to it.

There may be an exceptional instance here and there. After all, priests are mortals, and are not exempt from weariness, ill-health, headaches, etc.

¹ St. Luke xv. 11 to the end.

They actually own both nerves and livers! The task of sitting boxed up for hours in a stuffy confessional, and the strain of entering into the spiritual distresses of each new-comer as though he or she were the only one, is no slight tax upon patience and self-control. What wonder, then, if now and again a sharp word escape, and how unreasonable it is to make no allowance for some occasional lack of sympathy!

'But,' you may say, 'surely the priest *must* despise me for what I have had to confess. Why, I despise myself!' Despise you? Woe betide him if he did! He is conceived in sin like yourself, and—except he be a very slave to pride—knows well that only the grace of God prevents him from doing the like or worse. Don't imagine that the confessor sits, as it were, upon some lofty moral eminence looking down with contemptuous pity upon the piece of frailty kneeling at his feet! Such a fancy would be more in keeping with 'the proud priest' of cheap Protestant fiction than with the spirit of the Catholic priesthood.

Undeceive yourself, if you need to. The hearing of confessions, far from fostering pride, is one of the most *humbling* duties a priest has to fulfil. Who am I (his thought must be) that I should be entrusted with the inmost secrets of conscience—God's secrets; and how little have I to do with the glorious transformation of a sin-laden soul from darkness and remorse into light and peace, of which I am *made* the instrument! Surely this wonder is far too Divine for any man to plume

Hearing
confes-
sions no
proud
duty.

himself upon it. The priest, dear friends, is flesh and blood, and cannot but sympathize with the ordeal to human pride through which you are so bravely passing in order to make amends to your offended Lord. Why, then, be so greatly afraid to tell anything, no matter what? 'But I shall never be able to look that priest in the face again. I must avoid him, for he will be thinking of my sins.' My good friend, the priest has something more to do than to be for ever remembering what he has heard in numberless confessions! The sacred Tribunal of Penance stands in his mind as *quite another world*, having no connection with the intercourse of daily life.

But a grain of practical experience is worth cart-loads of theory. Let me put the case thus: You must be aware that in small and out-of-the-way Catholic missions there is often but one priest. Hence, as a rule, he knows the consciences of the great majority of his sheep, supposing these to be practical Catholics. Now, if your theory be correct, how do you account for the fact that usually the priest is a most welcome visitor in the houses of his parishioners? Did the latter feel shy of him, for the reason that he has heard their confessions, surely 'Not at home' would be the common answer to his inquiry at the house doors of his penitents. Yet even non-Catholics are wont to remark upon the easy social terms on which the Catholic priest stands with his people, as compared to their own clergymen, taken as a body. Hence, in practice, the confessional

A common-sense view.

does *not* operate as a social barrier between priest and penitent. What other people, who may have precisely the same weaknesses as you, can abide so cheerfully, that can you also.

So be perfectly *open* and *sincere* in unburdening your souls.

Wrong
attitude of
penitents.

Confession is not to be regarded as a sort of *tussle between confessor and penitent*—a moral game of ‘tug-o’-war’—the priest trying to extract from you as much as possible, and you striving to hold back as much as you are able.¹ Or, to use another comparison, it is no part of a priest’s duty to pump you dry if he can. Confession is your duty, not his, for his turn comes another day. You cannot hold yourself quit because by some vague and shadowy allusion to your sin you have ‘given him a fair chance’ of getting on its scent. Still, if you feel so shy and nervous as to be unable to get out the truth, the confessor in his charity will certainly help you through upon your giving him the slightest hint of your difficulty.

Holy
Com-
munion.

Holy Communion, again, is a specific against the rebellion of our lower passions.² What need to prove that the reception of the most pure Body and Blood of Christ within our corruptible bodies must cleanse and purify us! Even as a virtue went out from Him of old, when the afflicted touched the hem of His garment, so contact with the sacred species of the Holy Eucharist, and the

¹ Biddy’s idea was wrong. ‘I said to his Riverence: “You’ll accuse me, and I’ll defend meself.”’

² Especially *Frequent and Daily Communion* (see Decree of Pius X.). St. Alphonsus Liguori asserts that there is no passion, however inveterate, ‘which can resist Daily Communion.’

all-sanctifying Presence beneath them, will heal even long-standing infirmities of the soul.

Daily Safeguards.—It is most important for all of us to recognise that ‘the flesh’ occupies a prominent place among the evil influences of the world. Moreover, in our present advanced state of material civilization, we are daily surrounded by a thousand incitements to the indulgence of *sensuality*. This term, though in common usage generally associated with sinful excess, does not necessarily imply any. I am here using the word in its more technical sense for that *natural liking* for whatever pleases the senses, and dislike of the opposite, which exists in saint and sinner alike, and is a necessary element of real human nature. It is only when we freely allow sensuality, as explained, to get the better of our reason and of God’s Commandments that sin is reached. Taking sensuality in this sense, nowadays the arts and sciences, as applied to the accessories of human life—to bodily health and culture, food, clothing, furniture, adornment, amusements, locomotion, and the rest—are actively engaged in flattering all the senses, and eliminating everything that is unsightly, unpleasant, rough, hard, fatiguing or painful to them.

Thus, the chastening influence of that natural affliction of the senses, which is to a certain extent inseparable from mortal existence, has in our day been reduced to the minimum.

Is all this wrong and wicked? It would be a most harmful exaggeration to say so. There is in it much that is rational and lawful, much that is useful and good, and even helpful towards God’s service.

Moderation in pleasures of sense.

Pleasure not of itself wicked.

But with
out self-
denial it
leads to
sin.

No, it is not all sinful, nor, if often fraught with danger, will it be equally so for all characters alike. Nevertheless, if we yield ourselves passively to this wholesale pleasuring of the senses, a general fostering and strengthening of sensual tendencies must necessarily ensue. Our lower appetites, being thus continually fed, will fatten and grow saucy, like spoilt children, and finally break out into rebellion against God's Commandments; and then there *is* sin. This is specially the danger of young people just embarking upon life, the varied experiences of which have for them all the charm of novelty and excitement. Without caution, self-control, and a good deal of active self-denial, they can never hope to keep themselves 'unspotted from this world.'

Thus, whosoever would keep safe his treasure of purity will find it necessary to place some check upon his enjoyment, even of things lawful, and this spells self-control and self-denial. Certainly, no one will conquer in the struggle who is constantly guilty of fully deliberate minor abuses of the senses in the direction of unchastity, such as too great freedom in the use of his sense of sight, indiscriminate curiosity in suggestive reading, great effeminacy and luxury in tending and ministering to his body. It is not any single excess, perhaps, that is sinful in itself, or that even leads to grievous sin, but rather the *cumulative effect* of the unrestrained gratification of sense upon every occasion, which, by constantly adding fuel to the fire of passion, results in a conflagration under some stronger temptation than usual.

Another important safeguard, particularly for the weaker ones, is care for the *virtue of modesty*, a different thing to purity, though the two are closely related as sister-virtues. Or, to speak more appropriately, modesty is the outer defence of the citadel of purity. As long as this defence is held the citadel will have little to fear. The greater freedom of manners in these regions, the larger independence of intercourse and movement allowed nowadays to young women, makes this virtue more than ever vital. Once ordinary rules of prudence and reserve, such as the female instinct of modesty suggests, are neglected, then danger is near enough. Neglect of ordinary propriety does not necessarily spring in the beginning from any peculiar bent towards depravity beyond what every man, woman, and child born in sin has inherited from Adam. Other causes more commonly start the mischief, such as a desire to attract *notice* or *admiration*, which is vanity, not sensuality; a craving for constant change, excitement, mischief, or that strange perversity which forcibly impels young people to do a thing for the simple reason that their elders have warned them *not*.

Modesty
the out-
work of
chastity.

They perhaps see in such cautions nothing better than the melancholy croaking of folk who, having lost their own youthful zest or opportunity for enjoyment, would enviously rob others, possessing both, of their rightful share in this world's pleasures. But the pitiful end of it may be the loss of maiden or matrimonial innocence—a dis-

aster never so much as dreamt of, even if understood, at the outset, by the victim of her own folly, and the bare idea of which would have caused unspeakable horror.

Proximate
occasions
of sin.

‘He that loves the danger shall perish in it.’¹ *Proximate occasions of sin* must be shunned if sin is to be avoided.² But we must notice the theological difference between *necessary* and *voluntary* occasions. *Necessary* occasions are those which in our particular state or condition of life are practically unavoidable. Thus, I am not bound to live in solitude because, in converse with men, I may be tempted to calumniate my neighbour. *Voluntary* occasions are those of my own making or which depend upon my own free action—e.g., choosing to live in a house where I am led into sin by the mere presence or example of others, whether this be due to my own peculiar weakness of character or not. Temptations that meet us in the ordinary course of *lawful daily duty* will seldom hurt us as long as we substantially perform our religious duties and put our trust in God; and, moreover, the occasions being unavoidable, we are not to neglect duty on their account. Apart from *necessary* occasions, there are others which

¹ Ecclus. iii. 27.

² By ‘occasion of sin’ is meant any object, pursuit, amusement, companionship—in fact, any circumstance whatever of life—that I know will pretty certainly lead me to commit sin. Where *mortal* sin is concerned, a sincere resolve either to shun its *immediate* occasion, or to use special means to place danger of consent at a distance, is essential for forgiveness and absolution.

are, strictly speaking, avoidable, but to shun which would cause considerable difficulty and inconvenience to myself or to others who have claims upon me. Here I have an alternative—namely, of using such additional means of grace as will in all probability secure my safety in temptation.

Such, dear friends, are the chief protections All flesh is weak. against the allurements of sinful flesh. Nor do I lay them before you out of any low opinion of your virtue. There is nothing wonderful in the very best of us being sometimes tempted in this kind, or else how should we find it set down as a special gift of God granted to a few of His great Saints that they never, or only once, experienced temptations of the flesh? This truth should comfort us, and prevent our fancying that there must be something peculiarly wrong with us because we are not as favoured as a Thomas Aquinas or an Aloysius Gonzaga. It should also tend to diminish the pain we feel, when we have to mention things of this kind in our confessions. And if the case be no worse than temptation, however extreme, there is no reason why we should not all the while be in very full possession of the virtue of chastity—that fruit of the Holy Ghost of which He speaks in such glowing language.

‘O how beautiful is the chaste generation with The charm of chastity. glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present they imitate it: and they

desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts.’¹

May ours be the prize of ‘the pure of heart’—that of seeing for ever Jesus, ‘the Crown of Virgins.’

¹ Wisd. iv. 1, 2.

THE SEVENTH AND TENTH
COMMANDMENTS.

No. XXV.

DUTIES TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR'S GOODS.

'Thou shalt not steal.'

'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.'

UNDER the Fifth Commandment we viewed together man's duty towards human *life*. Then, under the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, we dealt with those precepts by which Almighty God protects the *source* of life—the institution of marriage. Now we come to a fresh Commandment, regulating our conduct towards the *means* of life—or 'goods of fortune,' as they are called—which term embraces money or possessions, and rights relating to the same. This Seventh Commandment forbids injustice to our neighbour in their material goods, or what is equivalent to these. It inculcates the virtue of justice towards men. These are two sets of rights claiming our observance—the rights of God, and the rights of men in relation to each other. We hear far too little nowadays of the Divine rights, and often far too much of windy rhetoric or sentimental poetry concerning those of His creatures. Justice, in the fullest sense, requires us to respect both

Relation
of this
Com-
mand-
ment to
others.

orders of rights, while reason itself claims an immeasurable precedence for the Divine.

Meaning
of justice

And what does justice mean? Simply yielding to another what of right is his own. To God, the Supreme Owner of all things, *everything* is due. Thus, justice to God has the wider range. It is to this more extended justice that the Scriptures exhort us in many places—for instance, in the words of Christ: ‘Except your justice shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.’¹ Now, there were many other forms of offence for which Our Lord condemned the leaders of the Jewish people besides unjust dealing with their neighbours. In fact, this kind of sin does not figure at all prominently in that long and terrible indictment which He pronounced against them. Justice towards God, therefore, involves a complete surrender on man’s part of his whole being to his Creator, and so includes the practice of many other virtues besides that of justice to men, as, for example, the exercise of the child-like submission of mind to the truths revealed by God which we call Faith—the worship of God by the virtue of religion, etc.

Justice to
man in our
dealings.

Man’s rights, on the other hand, are limited, and on both sides—namely, by the rights of God over him, and by the rights of his fellow-man. In the present Commandment we are dealing directly with the rights of men in relation to each other. The Divine right is only involved inas-

¹ St. Matt. v. 20.

much as God is the Fountain of all justice, and, moreover, has the right to command mutual justice to His creatures. So we are taking justice in its narrowed and more ordinary sense of just dealing between man and man *in the matter of earthly goods and possessions*, or of rights connected with these. Such being the scope of our present subject, you see at once what a wide one it is—so wide, in fact, that it would be impossible to treat it exhaustively within the compass of a few letters.

All I can hope to do is to select from the immense amount of material those points which are likely to be of more general use to my readers.

I shall observe the following order in my remarks: (1) I will touch upon one or two applications of the Commandments not expressly set forth in the Catechism, since they belong to a fuller treatment than elementary instruction requires. (2) Next I shall develop more fully the answers contained in the Catechism. This letter will confine itself to the first of these two heads.

In approaching the subject of man's rights to temporal possessions, a preliminary question meets us, and calls for an answer. How far may we form our consciences by what is prescribed by those laws of our country which regulate our conduct in matters of justice? To this question it is not possible to give a cut-and-dried reply. Still, it may be laid down that, *generally speaking*, we are safe in helping ourselves to a decision as to what is lawful by what the law permits or prohibits. Since the law of Nature (or light of reason) does

Bearing of
State laws
on justice.

not suffice for settling all the details of justice, the State has a right to decide in doubtful cases, provided it does not manifestly do violence to the law of Nature or to the revealed law of Christ. So when we say that national laws are upon the whole a safe guide for conscience in the present matter, we are not maintaining that everything must be right because determined by the law. This would be clearly false. For instance, the Divorce Laws are repugnant to the teaching of Christ in the Gospel, as explained to us by the authority of His Church. Yet it remains true that the State has a *right* to supplement the uncertainties of other laws of a superior force. This is a necessary accompaniment to its *duty* of promoting the peace and well-being of the country. Otherwise citizens would be continually in a state of mutual contention about their rights, even more so than they are at present.

There are cases, however, in which the law does not bind the conscience *on the spot*, so to say, but only after it has pronounced a decision upon the individual case of dispute by the mouth of its legitimately appointed magistrates and courts of justice.

Bank-
ruptcy
laws.

Some laws, again, may at first sight appear unjust, and to override clear individual rights, as, for example, the Bankruptcy Laws. A man who has failed financially, and has passed through the Bankruptcy Court, honestly observing the conditions prescribed by law, is 'white-washed'—*i.e.*, his debts, however great, are held to be

extinguished. This may press hardly upon individual creditors concerned. But the general good of the trading community at large is here made to supersede individual interests, though these even are undoubtedly benefited in the long-run. Moreover, inasmuch as this legal provision is well known, and men enter into business transactions fully aware of the possible risk of bad debts which they run, and, further, in many ways provide against that risk by compensating precautions, they are held as virtually consenting to losses that may occur through the failure of those they deal with.

From this it might seem to follow that, on the same principle, all the myriad forms of dishonest dealing commonly practised by unscrupulous business men would stand justified. Are not these dishonesties well known by everyone to be in vogue? A man therefore becomes a virtually consenting party to them upon engaging in business, in spite of this knowledge. But here we have a totally different case. For we must draw a wide distinction between corrupt practices born of mere lust for gain, which men adopt upon their own private responsibility, and proceedings like those of the Bankruptcy Court, which are regulated by State authority for the good of the greater number. Of course, if it can be proved that the commercial public at large is tacitly and generally agreed upon a certain method of business which considered in itself is unjust, such a transaction may in course of time become just in practice,

though the originators sinned against justice by setting the example. To him who knows and is willing, no injustice is done.

Rights of
minors.

Let me now refer to the rights of one class of the community—the *rights of children* under age—pointing out that where the term ‘son’ is used it is meant to include ‘daughter’ as well. A son, though he be still a minor, is not on that account incapable of dominion over property and possessions. He can *own* things as well as another. Thus, whatever comes to him by inheritance, or by gift, or by his own industry, is truly his own. His father has no right to such goods merely because he is a father. Yet as long as the son is under age and lives under parental control, the father will, ordinarily speaking, act for his son, with the right to manage or administer his son’s property, but with the corresponding *duty* to do so for the *son’s* good and advantage. He is a grievously unjust parent who recklessly squanders his son’s goods upon his own pleasures or risks them in rash speculations.

This right and duty of the father lasts until such time as the son is removed from subjection to him—say, by marrying, by leaving home to enter upon some form of work or employment, or by entering the army or navy, and the like.

Earnings
of minors.

But what if the son still live at home, while at the same time earning money by his own industry? According to English law, the father may in strict justice claim his son’s earnings until

the latter reaches the age of sixteen—this in compensation for present and past maintenance. After the above age has been attained he is no longer bound to support his son free of charge. If the son is accustomed to hand over his earnings acquired outside his home, or else works at home for his parent without seeking payment, he is regarded as freely consenting to this state of things unless some special agreement has been made. Whether a minor earning money commits injustice by retaining a portion of his earnings for his use against the will of his parents will depend upon circumstances. The parent may tacitly consent to this, and as a rule a father will act unwisely by disallowing pocket-money. The want of it may easily become a source of temptation, especially to boys. But even supposing the father to be manifestly unwilling, the son is not bound in justice to hand over more than may be reasonably held sufficient to compensate for his keep. The latter may, nevertheless, be a very incompetent judge as to what is a sufficient contribution to family expenses, and should not rely wholly upon his own judgment in the matter.

We have already seen—under the Fourth Commandment—that children are bound in ‘piety’ to support their parents according to their power and the needs of the case, and conversely, of course, parents their children. Here we must add that this duty is also one of *justice*, prescribed alike by the natural law and the decisions of English courts. A similar duty binds wives in relation to

their husbands, and, needless to say, husbands in relation to their wives.

Now to deal with one or two ways or 'titles' by which *property may be acquired*.

'Treasure
trove.'

I. *Finding Treasure*. — English law defines treasure as 'Any money, coin, gold, silver, plate, or bullion found hidden in the earth, or other private place, the owner thereof being unknown,' and claims such 'treasure trove' for the Crown. Theologians, however, of weight mostly regard this enactment as *penal*—i.e., as not binding the *conscience*, except upon the law interfering and demanding the treasure on behalf of the State. In the first instance, therefore, the finder may lawfully appropriate such treasure.

Lucky
purchases.

Thus, if I purchase a *bureau* or chest, or other article, at a sale, and discover money or jewels therein, hidden in some secret part of it, the treasure is mine, unless there be some sign as to who is its lawful owner, for then the owner would not be really 'unknown.' This might occur where the goods sold are known to have belonged to a certain person. The valuables discovered would no longer be real 'treasure' according to the definition given, but rather lost property, of which more presently.

A *connoisseur* in pictures, who sees a valuable painting offered for sale at a low price, may justly buy it at that figure, though through his superior knowledge he recognise it as a precious work of art capable of being sold for a large sum of money. The justice of a price does not depend upon the

purchaser's *individual* appreciation, but upon that actually had by the public at large. So our picture-fancier may reap the benefit of his greater knowledge without injustice. Nevertheless, he might sin grievously against *charity* if the seller, ignorant of the picture's value, were in temporal distress and forced to sell off his goods. On the other hand, where the lowness of the price asked comes from the real value of an article being *concealed from the public eye*, it would not be just to buy it for a mere song. Suppose the case of what seems to be a square deal board covered with whitewash. I know privately that there is a valuable original painting concealed under the whitewash which can easily be restored. Here I should do injustice by purchasing at the low price. The same would apply to what passed for a dirty piece of red glass, but which I recognised to be a ruby of great size and value.

2. *Lost Property*.—As a traveller going along the road, or as a charwoman cleaning out an untenanted house, I come across a crumpled piece of paper. On smoothing it out I find it to be a five-pound note. What is my duty? 1. It does not become my lawful property from the mere fact of my finding it, since it has a rightful owner somewhere. 2. I am not bound, *as a matter of justice* and under the present Commandment, to rescue it, and if I were to leave it to its fate I should not be bound to make its loss good to the owner when discovered. 3. But justice would forbid my burning it, and charity would usually bind me to rescue

Findings.
Rules
to be
observed.

it, and so save loss to my unknown neighbour. Justice would also forbid me putting any fresh hindrance to its recovery by the real owner—say, by hiding it away in some secret corner of the house, unless this were done for its safety, in the owner's interest, whenever he became known.

4. On taking charge of it, I am bound to take ordinary care of it, according to its nature and value. If it were a watch, for instance, I might not give it to my baby boy as a plaything, for he would certainly want to find out what it was made of.

5. I am bound in justice to take ordinary and *bona-fide* means for discovering the owner, in proportion to the value of the lost article.

6. These means being taken, and a sufficient time having elapsed, so that there seems no reasonable prospect of the real owner turning up, I may lawfully appropriate it to my own use.

7. But what if, contrary to all likelihood, the owner afterwards appear and prove the article or money to be his? If I still have it, I must hand it over, for the claim of the owner does not perish; but I may justly deduct any expenses incurred in my search for the owner—*e.g.*, by advertising. So, too, if I have purchased things with the money found, and these still exist, I must surrender them or else their equivalent. In case the goods have been used up, or have deteriorated by use, I am not bound to make good either of these losses. Similarly, if I gave away the money to the poor—*e.g.*, by putting it into a poor-box or giving it to a charitable purpose, or otherwise disposed of it without benefiting myself

—the owner has no claim to compensation. He is rightly considered to have been willing that I should dispose of lost property that had passed so far out of his control. The dominion possessed by an owner over his property is not exclusively a *moral* one. That is to say, besides the *moral* relationship between owner and owned there must be some sort of physical control on the part of the owner over his belongings to make his right complete and efficacious. In the present case this physical control is destroyed by hopeless loss—hopeless in the sense that the finder has been honestly unable to restore the connection between the owner and his goods by the use of such means as he is bound to take for the purpose.

We will now review some of the ways of breaking the seventh Divine precept, and I shall also add some brief remarks upon the Tenth.

Theft.—As we learnt in our childhood, the Stealing. Seventh Commandment forbids ‘taking away or keeping what belongs to another.’ This, of course, supposes the lawful owner to be *unwilling*. For, once more : ‘To him who knows and is willing no injury is done.’ Nor is the owner’s *express* consent always necessary. For he may show himself a consenting party by his studied want of care for his belongings, or by making no objection, in spite of being evidently quite aware that others make free with his goods. (Here, however, we must guard against laxity in *presuming consent upon frivolous grounds*.)

It is easy enough to see that there is sin in

Secret
'borrow-
ing.'

taking away from another's keeping what belongs to him, with the intention of keeping the same. It may not be quite so plain to the less-instructed that it is equally dishonest secretly to *use* other people's goods or money *against their will*, though it be only for a time, and with the intention of giving back. Thus, to appropriate to one's self another man's money, to be used for a time (say, in order to meet a pressing difficulty), is, except the owner consent, a species of theft. The essence of theft lies in the injury done to the right which every man has over the *whole* of his property; and this right includes, besides simple *ownership*, the benefit of its free and uninterrupted *use*. How many are beguiled into theft by the pretext, 'I'm only just borrowing for the moment; of course I shall put it back again'! Many a prisoner is now 'doing his time' in His Majesty's gaols for yielding to this fallacy, which led him on from bad to worse.

Socialistic
errors.

Theft cannot be justified on the ground that the person defrauded is very rich—a millionaire—and therefore will 'never miss' what is taken. No doubt the sin is greater when committed upon the poor and needy. But stealing from the rich is still theft, and, if to a notable amount, a mortal sin. The right of the rich to what is theirs is just as sacred as that of the poor man. It is no argument to say, 'Look at him! He has far more than he can possibly need, or knows what to do with. He neglects his duty of ministering to the wants of his needy fellow-creatures. So I help

myself.' If the wealthy neglect their duties to the poor, as it is to be feared a good many selfish and worldly rich people do, that is certainly wrong. But what belongs to them is still *their own*, and to steal it is sin. Two wrongs do not make a right. The social state of the world may be very topsy-turvy. Yet the way to right things is not to oppose wrong to wrong, but for *each* one to do right in his particular sphere, and, for the rest, to pray, wait, and trust in God.

Theft, though always sinful and particularly disgraceful, is not always a *mortal* sin. The value of what is stolen may be too small a violation of God's command to cause Him to deprive the thief of Heaven or punish him with hell. Again, the person defrauded may not be so needy as to receive *grave* injury from a theft which is petty when considered in its money value. Then, again, the thefts of children at home less easily amount to *mortal* sin than those of strangers, on account of their general claim to the use of family goods.

Guilt of theft.

To constitute theft, it is not necessary that the goods in question should actually be removed from the possession of their lawful owner by fraud. This is clear in the case of *loans* or *borrowing*. I may have borrowed from another with his full knowledge and consent. Nevertheless, I am dishonestly robbing him of the *use* of his own property if I retain the loan longer than the period agreed upon. Possibly, contrary to my expectation at the time of borrowing, I may find myself unable to return the loan by the proper date. Of the

Repaying loans.

moral aspect of such inability something will be said further on. But it is useful to observe here that a man is dishonest in borrowing *what he sees no reasonable hope of being able to repay*. There are far too many reckless speculators in the world who borrow to any extent, relying on the theory: 'I may just as well fail for £10,000 as for £10.' This sort of rash *gambling* with the property of others is but thinly-veiled robbery.

Violation
of trusts.

Another way of injuring our neighbour in his goods and belongings is committed by those *charged with the care of other people's property*, who either wilfully or by sheer neglect waste it or expose it to waste or loss, or, what is worse, devote it to purposes not intended by the owner, whether for private advantage or for the benefit of friends.

Examples.

This is a point to be borne in mind by *trustees* (for money or other property)—*servants*, charged with the management of domestic stores, or the care of wardrobes—*shop hands* or *factory hands*, who have many opportunities of misusing the property of their employers. *Schoolgirls* and *schoolboys* may sin by wilful injury to property belonging to their school. They have the *use* but not the *abuse* of furniture, books, windows, etc., conceded to them. Here it should be once more borne in mind that the wealth or poverty of the employer has nothing to do with the case, and that *restitution* must be made for injury done.

Con-
nected
thefts.

In the matter of theft, it makes a great difference, as to the *degree of guilt* incurred, whether the acts

of theft be quite disconnected and committed *as occasion offers*, or they form part of a *systematic habit of stealing* in some particular kind. For example, a *butler*, or other servant, might form a regular practice of using wine (perhaps even costly stuff), or other goods of his master, whether for himself or for treating visitors in the servants' hall. Such thefts may easily mount up to *grievous sin*, though the quantity taken each time be not of any notable value. It is the *settled mind to continue* these thefts that links together the separate acts, and causes them to accumulate from the moral point of view into one big total and to the point of mortal sin.

Buying and Selling.—Here we have a large field for possible dishonesty. The first question that presents itself is: What is a *just price* for any article? or, to go deeper: What is it that determines the price of a thing? It is the esteem which the public has of its usefulness and of its suitability for trading purposes.¹ On these considerations the public decides what it will give for the commodity. But this public valuation varies, within certain limits, according to circumstances of time and place. Thus, it is usual to find three different prices—the *lowest*, the *medium*, and the *topmost* price. Any of these is, morally speaking, a *just price* to ask and to give. To pay less than the *lowest* price, however, or to demand more than

¹ The suitability of a thing for purposes of commerce also enters in—for, *e.g.*, *water* is eminently useful, and yet it is not always paid for.

the *highest* is unjust, unless some special circumstance, such as the risk of not getting paid by an individual customer, should intervene to justify a charge above the highest price prevailing in the open market. Such is the theory of prices; but owing to the complex nature of trade and the keen competition existing in our days, it is morally impossible to fix beforehand the topmost price which it is lawful to ask and accept. In practice, therefore, one may, ordinarily speaking, consider that price to be just and fair *which the purchaser is willing to pay, and the seller to accept*, always provided that no *deception* be practised by either seller or buyer. The buyer can be reasonably supposed to know his own business and interest. This practical rule may be reconciled with the theory of prices above stated, by pointing out that if 'John Doe' be willing to give 'Richard Roe' 20s. for an article, this of itself forms a fair proof that 20s. does *not* really exceed the highest price in public estimation. If it did, John Doe would probably decline the bargain with thanks and go to another tradesman or dealer. Given an open market and the absence of fraud and deceit, the best bargain a man can make is the only workable definition of a *fair and just* bargain. Charity, however, may be grievously violated if a buyer take advantage of a seller's need and poverty to force him to part with his goods for a mere song.

Inferior
goods.

Perhaps one of the commonest offences against the Seventh Commandment in the matter of *buying and selling* is a *deliberate misrepresentation of the*

quality of goods. This is dishonest—even though the price charged be not above the *highest* market price. For the *lowest* price is also just, and the buyer has a right not to be *deceived* into paying more on the false pretext that the goods are of a better quality. Of course, those very *general* and *conventional* praises with which all sellers are wont to extol their wares should not be regarded as fraudulent, for this is a fashion of the trade which deceives no one. Since *price* depends upon the valuation of men, no injustice is done by traders amongst barbarous races who exchange a few pennyworths of glass beads for ivory or precious metals and stones. For, in the eyes of the purchasing public, the beads are worth it; and though the trader speedily makes a large fortune at the small outlay of a few shillings in gewgaws, both parties get what they desire and value. A story told in connection with the well-known advertisement, ‘Worth a guinea a box!’ well illustrates the above. Once a person sent the famous ‘*piller* of the British constitution,’ as he has been called, a box of his own pills, asking for a guinea in return. The story goes that Mr. Beecham sent the guinea—the first time, but that on the demand being repeated, he wrote back, ‘My pills are worth a guinea a box to *you*, but not to *me*.’ The trader among savages could say the same of his beads.

In the case of *artistic objects*—antiquarian curiosities and such—the ‘fancy’ prices paid are not unjust, if freely agreed upon between the buyer and seller, and no deceit be practised, such as

Curiosities.

passing off Birmingham ware for real old china. For such things as a rule have no *generally* accepted value with the public.

In all the above instances of cheating it must be noticed that the duty of making *compensation* for injustice done binds both the *seller* who takes too much and the *buyer* who pays too little.

Restoring
ill-gotten
goods

The Duty of Restitution.—To come now to the duty of *restoring ill-gotten goods*, an important point, since no one can receive forgiveness from God for injustice done unless he be *sincerely resolved* to make restitution. It is an *indispensable* element in true repentance. Moreover, this obligation *never expires* by mere *length of time*, no matter how far back in the past the wrong was committed. I say by *mere* length of time. *Other* circumstances may arise modifying the duty. With regard to the *payment of debt*—*e.g.*, those due to the trade for goods supplied—the law of the land often steps in and fixes a definite number of years (in England six years—*Statute of Limitations*), within which the debt must be claimed, or else the right of the creditor expires. But the reason apparently underlying this legal provision is not that *time* has extinguished the debt, but the creditor has clearly shown his indifference to payment by *never* putting in any sort of claim (sending in *no bill at all*) for so long a period. The State, for the *general* good of the community, fixes a definite period, and this legislation holds in conscience, if it does not satisfy a proper sense of *honour*. To explain: A creditor may delay unduly before sending in his claim, and

so cause the debtor serious injury by leaving him in ignorance as to his financial position. To 'limit' this abuse the Statute of Limitations denies the creditor all redress from the law after a certain time. Thus, when the time limit expires, the debtor's *legal* liability expires also. But what about *conscience*? Every honourable man wishes to discharge his lawful debts independently of the law in question. Yet the very existence of this law implies that delays of creditors may seriously injure and involve money losses to the debtor, who may have wound up his accounts in ignorance or forgetfulness of outstanding claims. It may thus happen that the injury attending payment of belated claims will suffice to free the debtor from any duty of *conscience*.

' Statute
of Limi-
tations '
and con-
science.

But in delicate questions of this kind theological advice should be sought in the confessional or otherwise.

Bona-fide inability to restore—for want of means—excuses from restitution, as long, that is, as the impossibility lasts; and, always supposing on the unjust offender's part a *sincere* intention to restore when able, the *guilt* incurred in God's sight will always be forgiven upon true repentance, and forms no bar to sacramental absolution, no matter how great the injustice done.

Inability
to restore.

Once I am able to restore, I have no right to *delay restitution* to the eleventh hour, and meanwhile, perhaps, spend money freely on dress, luxuries, pleasure trips, amusements, cards, betting, etc. This would be to wrong my creditor by exposing myself to the risk of being once more

Wrongful
delay in
restoring.

unable to repair the injury or loss. So, too, it is wrong to spend money freely upon *charities* or *religious purposes* (e.g., on stipends for Masses) in preference to making restitution or paying just debts—that is, when I cannot do *both*. Justice comes *first*, charity and free acts of devotion *second*. The proverb is right: ‘Be just before being generous.’ Needless to say, no man who has secretly injured his neighbour and proceeds to restitution is bound to *reveal* his criminal act. He may take every means in his power to screen his character, and, if others would be injured by his exposure, he is *bound* to take every precaution for restoring without being found out. We are familiar with public acknowledgments in the press for receipt of ‘conscience money’ sent in anonymously.

Fear of
detection.

A person will very seldom be excused from the duty of restitution by the fear of discovery and consequent loss of character (supposing him to have enjoyed so far a good reputation for honesty). For there are ways of restoring without danger of detection. But *delay* in restitution may sometimes be lawful for the sake of finding a safe opportunity. In such a matter—in which human nature will always be ready with pleas for evading duty—it is wiser to consult an experienced confessor.

As I said in the beginning, I make no pretence of exhausting the subject in hand. The name of conscientious problems that may arise out of this Commandment is legion, and there is a whole mass of difficulties *which must be left to the private direction and instruction of the confessional*.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

Little needs to be said about this precept, which forbids in *desire* what the Seventh forbids in *act*. The two precepts in this respect bear the same relation to one another as the Ninth does to the Sixth.

Unjust
desires.

Two points only need be noticed:

1. That for 'coveting' my neighbour's goods *sinfully* it is necessary that I should not only desire to have the *same* good things as my neighbour, but I must also wish him *to be deprived of them*. For a poor boy to wish he had a good suit of clothes *like* his wealthier companion is not wrong. He would be wrong in desiring to have the *identical* suit *instead* of his companion. So, too, poor servant girls, who look with longing eyes upon the fine dresses and jewels of their mistresses, do not sin by wishing they had as good themselves. If any fault be committed, it will be rather one of impatience and rebellion against the lot assigned to them by God (that of being more like to His Divine Son in their condition of life), than a sin against the Tenth Commandment. They must also check spiteful wishes that the tables may be turned.

What sort
of covet-
ing sinful.

2. The unlawful coveting of our neighbour's goods can never carry with it any duty of *restitution*, since no actual injury is thereby committed. The wish to steal or injure may be mortally sinful if the theft or injury desired be grave.

No case
for resti-
tution.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

No. XXVI.

DUTIES TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR'S FAME.

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'

I. RASH JUDGMENT.

WE have just finished dealing with the Divine precept which forbids our injuring another's material goods and interests.

But these are not a man's most valuable possessions, even in the natural order. Far more precious to a man is his *good name* and *character*. To rob our neighbour of the untarnished fame which he enjoys amongst his fellows is a far greater injury than to rob his safe. In fact, an unblemished reputation may be an essential means for securing material goods. We know how hard it is for anyone to obtain well-paid employment if his reputation be bad. The truly reformed criminal finds his honest effort to start afresh a well-nigh hopeless task for this reason. Even with a good character to rely on, many find a livelihood hard to come by.

We are forbidden by the Eighth Commandment to injure or to take away the good name of another. This may be done by *swearing falsely* against him, for instance, in a court of justice.

Value of
a good
name.

Unjust
perjury.

This is *perjury*, a grievous offence against two Commandments. It violates the Second Commandment by invoking God's truth in order to confirm a falsehood; and also the Eighth, by injuring character, supposing that the thing deposed to on oath be injurious to another's reputation.

By rash judgment we mean a *settled* opinion to another's prejudice formed upon *insufficient grounds*. Every man has a natural right to his neighbour's good opinion until he has proved himself unworthy of it; and the fact that he may, unknown to the world, be wholly undeserving does not destroy this right. The cynical rule sometimes adopted of deeming every man a knave until he shall have proved himself honest offends against justice and Christian charity.

What
makes a
rash
judg-
ment.

It is not necessary for a rash judgment that we should *express* it to others. This aggravation of sin will be dealt with later on, when we come to treat of calumny and detraction. It is enough that we wilfully register the adverse sentence in our own minds without having sufficient reason for doing so. Where there are sure grounds for our bad opinion there can be no *rashness* and no sin. If, for example, I see a person frequently showing clear signs of intoxication, there will be no rashness in my setting him down as a drunkard. Supposing that I think at all, it is impossible for me to avoid this conclusion, though charity will suggest my making all possible excuses for the offender. Notice, again, we are now speaking of *thoughts* against our neighbour, not of *words*.

There may be no wrong in my judgment, but there may be much in expressing it. But of this presently.

Let me call attention to the difference between a judgment which is rash and one which is merely *false* or inaccurate *in point of fact*. The first is always sinful if deliberate, the second not necessarily so. The proofs of my neighbour's guilt may appear so thoroughly convincing as to justify my unfavourable verdict, and yet for all that I may afterwards find myself to have been mistaken. Circumstantial evidence is liable to this defect. There are sad cases on record of prisoners who have been severely punished upon circumstantial evidence for offences of which they were afterwards found to have been quite innocent. And yet the judge's sentence, though *false*, was not therefore *rash*, since circumstances may have seemed to point unmistakably to the prisoner's guilt. These are cases of a pure, though deplorable, error of judgment, unless there is culpable negligence.

How are we to determine the *degree of guilt* before God incurred by a rash judgment?

Guilt
incurred.

In theory, the guilt will be *mortal* when the evil rashly imputed would grievously injure our neighbour's reputation. In other words, what would amount to grievous sin as a detraction or calumny if *spoken* will be equally a mortal offence if rashly judged in my own mind. But, *practically* speaking, people will no doubt be often excused from *grievous* sin, at least, on the score of imperfect

advertence to their rashness. The mind will often rush headlong to the unfavourable conclusion without reflection. The judgment is formed rapidly, and almost before the person has time to notice the absence of sufficient proof. Doubtless such hastiness, if habitual, will involve some venial guilt, inasmuch as it reveals a settled disposition to believe ill of others rather than good, and a general want of guard over the drift of our thoughts. But where there is no such general tendency or carelessness, and a person is surprised upon occasion into a rash judgment of the kind without any advertence to its rashness, there will be no sin at all.

Rash Suspicions.—There is a difference between rash judgments and rash suspicions, since the judgment implies a fixed and unhesitating decision to our neighbour's injury; and a suspicion, only a more or less doubtful *conjecture*. Less proof is needed to justify a suspicion than to found a judgment. To constitute sin, the suspicion must go beyond the force of the *evidence* of evil. For it is not wrong to doubt another's uprightness when there is reasonable ground for doubting. Here, again, reason will have its way. We never sin as long as we are governed by right reason. Yet charity, no doubt, will often enable us to blind ourselves to the force of the evidence, and move us to reject the suspicion.

This tendency of human nature to suspect others is very strong. One of its commonest forms is to suspect others of *taking our things*, when the latter

Suspicious.

Tendency to suspect.

suddenly and unaccountably disappear. Servants and employes of all sorts are frequently victims to this form of injustice. I lose something. Perhaps a little self-knowledge ought long since to have convinced me that, owing to careless habits, I am *always* mislaying things. But no! 'Who can have taken it?' is the indignant *first* thought that flashes across my mind. I then proceed to consider which of several persons about me most probably stole or misappropriated my goods. Just when I have fixed upon the culprit, and arranged some plan for convicting him, I chance to put my hand into my pocket, to open a drawer, or to lift up some object near at hand, and lo, and behold! there is the missing article all the while! A common experience.

Now, the thing to be here noticed is that *first* and irresistible impulse to blame *someone else*—anybody except my faultless self. I hastily *assume* from the start that someone *must* have been doing what he ought not.

Another form. I see a neighbour who, to borrow a Shakespearian phrase, carries 'a lantern in the poop'—that is, exhibits a 'jolly red nose'—and forthwith I write him down a toper.

Occult
arts and
false sus-
picions.

Again, in these days of phrenology and palmistry, one has need, perhaps, to guard more carefully against rash suspicions and judgments as to people's *practical* characters. Without here discussing the right or the wrong of either of these arts as sometimes practised (let them for the moment be deemed 'gray,' and not 'black'),

one may point out that information (?) obtained in these ways will at most enlighten us as to people's natural *tendencies*, but supply no reliable proof that such tendencies are *indulged*—at all events, in the present. Self-control has to be taken into account. In general, I think, we may take to heart a saying of Father F. W. Faber, of the Oratory. He says that, of two possible interpretations of a neighbour's action, we had best adopt the more charitable, and that we shall generally find it to be the *right* one.

In illustration of this rule of charity, we may recall a true incident told us in *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart*¹—the story of that poor woman who was reeling along the pavement in one of our big towns, and then supporting herself against some railings. A Catholic woman passing by was begged by her Protestant companion not to go near the creature: 'She's in drink.' But the Catholic did not accept this interpretation, and on closer observation saw it to be a case of a dangerous fit commencing; learnt by a sign from the sufferer (the clutching of a badge put into the poor woman's hand) that she was a Catholic, and helped her to make an act of contrition, after which the poor creature fell dead on the pavement. How glad must that good Samaritan have been that she had not hearkened to the unfounded suspicions suggested to her, in perfect good faith, no doubt, by her Protestant friend!

¹ June, 1902, p. 220.

No. XXVII.

DUTIES TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR'S FAME—
Continued.

2. LYING.

LET us pursue our study of the Eighth Commandment.

Lies.—By a *lie* I mean any *sin* against truthfulness in speech. It is necessary to state this, because the term is sometimes incorrectly applied to any word by which a speaker conceals the truth. Now, as we shall see presently, there are occasions upon which the truth may be veiled without any sin : sometimes it would be a *sin not* to veil it.

Lying—in
what
sense
venial.

Catholic theologians commonly tell us that lying is—as a general class of sin (*ex genere suo*)—*venial*. This is true, but is not the same as saying that *every kind* of lie is only venially sinful—nor that lies are *permissible*, may be *winked at*, are of *small moral significance*.

Nothing
justifies a
lie.

So far from this, it is the constant teaching of all Catholic moralists, of whatever school, that a lie is *always of its own nature sinful*, and that no one may tell the smallest lie even though he could thereby save the universe from destruction, or any number of perishing souls from eternal loss—another illustration of the truth that a good end in view can never make lawful the use of essen-

tially wrong means. The Protestant fiction that Catholics are 'dispensed' by the Pope or the priests from truthfulness, when a lie would be 'for the good of their Church,' is but an ignorant libel undeserving of serious notice.

When, therefore, Catholic moralists state that lies, as a general class of sin, are *venial*, they only mean that a simple (but sinful) violation of truth, *apart from further evil consequences of a serious nature*, although an offence against the law of God, does not rob the soul of God's friendship, nor merit for it eternal condemnation; and probably a large proportion of the lies committed in everyday converse produce no such evil results. Thus it produces a false conscience in children to tell them, 'If you tell fibs you will never go to heaven.'

Anyone can see that the lie of excuse told by a child in order to escape a beating *must be venial* in the theological sense just referred to, though dishonourable and calling for correction. It is equally plain that the lie by which a person destroys another's reputation for honesty, temperance, chastity, etc., or causes serious loss in money or goods, is *grievously* sinful. But this mortal guilt does not spring from the lie as a *mere violation of truth*, but from the particular *subject* of the lie and the grave injury caused. So while as a class lies are venial, particular *kinds* under that class are *mortal*, and sometimes call for compensation or restitution. More will be said about this under 'Calumny.'

I do not propose to discuss at length the question as to what makes the essence of a lie, or what are

Differences in lies.

Scope here proposed.

the precise limits of truthfulness. The topic is a difficult one, and of tempting interest, but would lead me beyond the scope of these 'Letters.' It will be enough to point out that cases often occur in which the natural instinct of most truth-loving people rightly teaches them that they are not obliged to indulge the curiosity of Paul Prys—that they may so frame their answers to an *unlawful* explorer of their secrets as to effectually conceal facts which he or she has no right to know, and the communication of which might prove harmful to the questioner, to his victim, or to others. Every Minister of State, persons in high command, doctors, lawyers, confidential persons of all sorts, and especially the confessor—in reference to his most sacred duty of secrecy, *must necessarily* act upon this principle of concealment.

An inconsistency.

As a matter of fact, everyone acts upon it when needful, and yet some, and especially those deprived of the guidance of Catholic instruction will, after using the lawful expedient to protect momentous secrets, accuse themselves of telling a 'regular lie,' adding regretfully that 'really they were obliged to,' and 'couldn't help it.' Now, it is plain that if they 'couldn't help it'—that is, if a natural sense of right and of duty *morally* obliged them to deny or to conceal knowledge which they had—there could be no sin at all, and therefore no lie.

As to how such legitimate concealments of truth from indiscreet or innocent questioners may

be justified in theory, and reconciled with the general duty of dealing truthfully with our fellows, that will depend mainly upon what definition of a lie one adopts—a vexed question which I cannot here deal with. I may, however, point out that when mere evasions in speech will not effectually conceal a truth that ought to remain hidden, nothing but a positive *denial*, or flat negative, will avail. In such a case it is the far more common teaching of learned moralists that, out of reverence for the natural office of speech—which is to *express* thought—there must be in the mind of the speaker some genuine sense which will correspond with the denial given. For example, a mother is asked about the secret fall from virtue of her own daughter. Hesitation or evasion would be fatal, and she replies boldly : ‘There’s not a word of truth in the report.’ The greater number of Catholic moralists would require that she should say this with the meaning : ‘There is not a word of truth . . . as far as you have any right to know or to expect me, a mother, to tell you.’

All God-fearing people will exonerate the mother : hence she has not sinned against the Eighth Commandment in their eyes. Yet many of these would indignantly repudiate what they call the hateful, dishonest, un-English (the superlative of abuse !) practice of ‘mental restriction or Reservation.’ Now, what that mother used was precisely ‘mental restriction’—nothing more and nothing less. It consists in limiting or ‘restricting’ one’s answer to a particular sense, but

‘Mental restriction,’ or equivocation.

one somehow *connected* with the question asked, though not in the sense intended, and *unwarrantably* intended, by the indiscreet questioner.

To this practice certain *cautions* need to be appended.

1. It may not be adopted *wholesale*, or for every trivial cause. Otherwise that mutual trust amongst men so indispensable for human intercourse, and so necessary for the good of society, would be utterly destroyed. Its indiscriminate use would be simply *immoral*.

2. There must be sufficiently serious *cause* for so answering. Mere personal convenience of the moment—the avoidance of some trifling humiliation or unpleasantness—would be wholly insufficient to justify the practice.

3. For justification, besides *adequate* need, there should be some pretty obvious feature in the circumstances of the case from which an averagely intelligent questioner *ought to know* that correct information is not to be expected. The very nature of the question put—if relating to weightier secrets such as prudent men endeavour to hide—will generally be a sufficient clue.

Sinful
form of
equivoca-
tion.

There is an *excess* of 'restriction' (*restrictio pure mentalis*), amounting to a mere jugglery with words, which is never lawful. The following may serve as an example. I have just made a handsome profit by some business transaction. Paul Pry buttonholes me in the street and wants to know whether such is the case. Having good reason for not enlightening him, I reply, 'I have not,' sounding the final

slightly, and meaning, 'I have a knot'—e.g., in my 'sailor' necktie. Needless to say, this is simply unlawful.

Without exceeding proposed limits, let me add that the warm disputes on the present subject carried on among moralists, who have made Christian ethics a life-study, will be found to affect rather the *theory* of truthfulness than the verbal *practice*. For, in cases where an unlawful question has to be parried, they would all answer more or less to the same practical effect, like many others who are not moralists, and perhaps despise that class. The disputants mainly differ as to the *principles* upon which to defend the lawfulness of their more or less uniform outward practice. Then there are worthy people of the rough-and-ready, 'common-sense' type, who would probably sneer at *any* of the defences set up by expert theologians. Nevertheless, my friends, you may take it for certain that, when pressed by a concrete difficulty, these indignant, truth-loving, common-sense Britons will *in practice* go quite to the full length allowed by the theorists whom they despise, and often beyond.

The difference between these two camps—and not an insignificant one either—is that the so-called 'hair-splitting casuist,' armed with what he sincerely deems a sound moral principle for his guidance, will be acting *conscientiously*; while the rough-and-ready scorner of theories, having no defence to make, suspects himself of lying, but goes on with it, for all that. He is therefore

acting in conscientious *doubt* as to the *lawfulness of so acting*, which is in itself wrong.¹

'Not at home.'

It is customary, in the present connection, to quote two instances of 'mental restriction,' universally admitted to be lawful, and which prove the inconsistency of decrying this practice as a laxity of Catholic morals. These are: the answer given to visitors, 'Not at home'; and the criminal pleading, 'Not guilty'—in the supposition that the person called upon is really indoors, and the prisoner in the dock really guilty. 'Oh! but that's *quite* different!' someone exclaims. 'Everyone understands such answers. No one is deceived by them.'

Let us examine the worth of the protest. 'Everyone understands . . .' Well, that is rather a point in my favour, unless that word of Scripture, 'Every man is a liar,' ought to be taken in its literal sense. It is a point in my favour, provided such expressions really present all the

¹ For fear of 'scruples,' notice the phrase 'acting in *doubt* as to the *lawfulness of so acting*.' This mode of acting is always wrong. But take this example. Waking on my morning for Holy Communion, I am not sure whether I drank a glass of water at 11.30 p.m. or 12.30—*i.e.*, after midnight. I can't solve my doubt as to the *fact*; but since I have no sure proof that it was after midnight, I may still communicate, relying on the sound principle that my violation of the fast must be *established* in order for me to be bound to forego Holy Communion. Here I do indeed act in doubt about the *question of fact* (*viz.*, Did I drink after midnight or before?), but *not* in doubt as to the practical *lawfulness of communicating* under the circumstances, since I have a sound rule of conduct wherewith to settle my conscience.

elements of what is called 'mental restriction'; and they appear to do this. 'But they don't! For they *deceive* no one.' This retort implies that the causing of deception is an essential element in a lie. Now, deception seems rather a subsequent *effect* of lying, for there may be a real lie without any deception caused.¹ For example, Mr. Poser, K.C., counsel for the prosecution, is cross-examining witness for the defence. He has in his hand a genuine letter written and signed by witness, dated 'Valparaiso, January 10, 1902.'

Mr. P.: You say that you have never been out of England in your life? Witness: 'No, never.' Mr. P.: 'Quite sure of that?' Witness: 'Quite.' Mr. P. (showing inner page of letter): 'Is that your writing?' Witness: 'It is.' Mr. P. (reading): 'Valparaiso, January . . .' (Sensation in court.)

Did the witness lie to counsel? Yes. Was counsel deceived? Clearly not. So deception caused is no necessary part of a downright lie.

Let us return to 'Not at home.' It *states*, according to its *literal* sense, that the visited is away from home. If such be not the case, the servant is restricting his answer to a particular meaning, viz., 'Not at home *for you*.' Perhaps

¹ Though the simple fact that deception of another *results* from my answer be not an essential for a lie, yet a *direct wish to produce that effect*—as distinct from a mere endeavour to defend my lawful secret—would be unjustifiable. In cases where reservation becomes lawful, the deception suffered by the questioner is to be attributed rather to his obtuseness and lack of sense in expecting information on private matters.

someone may still insist that this is no real case of mental reservation. 'When I, Lady Alexandra Bromley, ask, "Is the Hon. Guinevere de Tomkyns at home?" I don't mean, "Is she indoors?" I don't care about that. I only mean, "Will she see me?" Her butler suavely answers with a bow fit for a duke, "Not at home," meaning, "No, she will not see you." He neither affirms nor denies anything as to her presence or absence.'

To this I would reply that Lady A. B.'s *meaning* is irrelevant. We are dealing with the quite ducal butler. Is he using 'mental reservation'? Surely he is; for the whole *purpose* of this stereotyped 'Not at home' is precisely to decently veil the actual truth, viz., that Mrs. G. de T. is indeed in her house, but does not want Lady A. B., some private *tête-à-tête* being in progress—a fact which, if revealed, would produce an impression of rudeness and inhospitality to be abhorred by society. And even if actual deception be an essential ingredient in a lie, my lady might well go away under the false impression that Mrs. G. de T. could not have been in her house, otherwise she would hardly have denied herself to so intimate a friend.

Pleading
'Not
guilty.'

'Not guilty,' supposing the prisoner fully conscious of guilt, is another accepted form of 'mental reservation.' It will mean, 'Not guilty *as far as I need tell you, unless you prove my guilt to twelve honest men and true.*' It will not avail to urge the legal necessity of allowing a murderer so to plead, in the interests of fair trial. Either the

'mental reservation' is lawful or it is not. If lawful, the principle of the moralists stands justified; if unlawful, it is a sinful lie, such as no one may tell, or be incited to tell,¹ in any interest whatsoever.

Forms of Lies.—In everyday life lies are often told in boasting or in joke. If the story be fabulous, so that the narrator is evidently only inventing a story for amusement's sake, he is not sinning any more than the writer of a novel. This is not because no *deception* is effected, but because the romancer's words do not profess to set forth real facts, but only fancies.

Common untruths.

The habit of lying, even when there is no *serious* guilt, is one to be most carefully checked in children. Its effects are far-reaching, especially in after-life. It often picks up associate vices of far greater depravity. There is a certain kinship between lying and dishonesty in dealings. Lying is often the parent of cheating, thieving, and forgery. Parents, nurses, and teachers should be careful not to cultivate untruthfulness in children by *questioning them too sternly* as to their doings, or rashly charging them with misdeeds that they *cannot prove on the spot*. A certain degree of indulgence shown to culprits upon free and open confession will help to enforce upon them the truth that 'honesty is the best policy,' and so encourage them to shun deceit.

Cultivation of truth in the young.

¹ In a criminal trial, 1903, a murderer refusing to plead one way or another, his counsel forced him to plead 'Not guilty.'

No. XXVIII.

DUTIES TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR'S FAME—
Continued.

3. DETRACTION AND CALUMNY.

THE important subject of *detraction* must now engage our attention. It deserves to be called important on account of the numerous occasions of offending God in this way which occur in our daily intercourse with men. For this reason I think it desirable to treat this matter at some length.

What is
detrac-
tion ?

Detraction consists in *injuring our neighbour's character by speaking ill of him*. So, you see, it is an offence not against *charity* alone, but—inasmuch as it robs our neighbour of that most valuable possession, his good name—against *justice* also.

Uncharit-
ableness
possible
without
detrac-
tion.

It is, however, possible and easy to offend in speech against charity without committing *detraction*, even in the particular form of talking of people's faults and misdeeds. This truth deserves to be insisted on ; for, by a strange confusion of ideas, it is not uncommon for people to argue that there can be no harm in their speeches against others, because these do not take away *character*—a sad delusion.

Examples. One may speak a good deal of evil against a neighbour without *detraction*. For example : John Doe

is a young man leading a very wild and dissipated life, and the whole town knows it. But Richard Roe, a retired invalid living at a distance, and a great friend of John's, has heard nothing about it. (The doctor has ordered that the patient is not to be worried.) But I, visiting the invalid, tell him the truth about John, and give him the benefit of that young prodigal's misdeeds in all their aggravating circumstances, and this without any necessity and merely by way of conversation. In consequence, Richard vows that John shall never darken his door again, to the latter's great distress. Wild John may be, but he owns a heart, after all, and has many a good turn done him by his friend. There is no *detraction* here; for the young man's life is common report. Yet I have done no slight unkindness—it was uncharitable of me. For the rule of *charity* is stricter and of wider range than the rule of *justice*. It requires me 'to love my neighbour as myself,' which means that I should not act towards others in ways that would reasonably pain *me* if pursued by them in my own regard; or, as it is popularly, but not too grammatically, expressed, 'Do to others as you would be *done by*.' By this test it is fairly easy to decide for one's self what is charitable and what is not, though not always to settle the *degree of guilt* incurred by the uncharitableness.

Another example. Jane is consumedly jealous of Susan. For has not Susan the means for dressing far more smartly than herself? Moreover, Susan is absurdly accomplished and horribly

run after. At the same time, everyone sees that Susan's excellence is disfigured by very obvious vanity and sharp attacks of 'tantrums.' So, when Susan's name comes up in conversation, Jane quickly settles upon it, like the biting horse-fly upon a horse's back in the hot summer, and shows what an exceedingly overrated young person Susan is. She has this fault and the other, as all can see, and did she not say this and do the other? etc. For all its hateful pettiness, such a speech is not *detraction*, since (as we suppose) the faults spoken of are visible to the ordinary observer. And should a listener exclaim, 'Jane, how *can* you be so uncharitable!' the latter will probably protest indignantly: 'Why, where's the harm! Everybody sees it! I'm only speaking the truth plainly!' (Poor Jane is very plain—'hence the tears!') Not *detraction*—no, but much *uncharitableness* born of jealousy.

Yet it is not easy, perhaps, to offend *mortally* by such speeches—that is, on the score of the *things said*—but possibly on account of the real *hate* which may at times inspire them. As the popular ditty puts it:

'It's not so much the thing he says,
As the nasty way he says it.'

(I trust, dear reader, that you will not apply these lines to the writer, since his motive is certainly not dislike of persons, but of faults—his own, I hope, included !)

With these preliminary remarks, let us consider

detracton more in detail. *Detraction* does not differ essentially from *calumny*, though the latter sin is an aggravated form of detracton. In the case of *detraction* the evil told about another is true; in that of *calumny* the thing charged is false. Hence the aggravation referred to. For *calumny* adds to the violation of charity and of justice a violation of truthfulness, a lie. But this additional fault will not make calumny a mortal sin if it be not so already on account of the grave injury caused to character by the nature of the fault imputed. Thus, to say that so-and-so lost his temper, when he did not, is not a mortal sin on account of the fault imputed, and does not become so on account of the *untruth* of the accusation. But, in confession, the priest may be obliged to ask which of the two forms of evil-speaking was committed on account of the different ways in which the injury done *must be made good*. If a calumny, the false accuser may be bound to *unsay* what he said, before those who heard him, so as to remove the unfavourable impression produced in their minds. Whereas, when the offence has been one of simple detracton—that is, when a true defect has been revealed—it would be a fresh fault, that of untruthfulness, to contradict the damaging statement. In this case reparation can only be made in indirect ways—*e.g.*, by taking opportunities for speaking specially well of the person defamed before those who heard the detracton, or by doing the victim of our mischievous tongue some service, spiritual or temporal.

Difference
between
detraction
and
calumny.

When is
detraction
com-
mitted?

Some remarks upon *what constitutes detraction* will probably be welcome to my readers. For earnest souls are often greatly puzzled to decide what is sin in this matter and what is not.

Difficulty
of avoid-
ing it:

1. By
speech.

There is nothing more difficult, perhaps, than to mix and converse with our fellows, and yet steer clear of backbiting. For this reason, probably, St. James declares: 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.'¹ Under 'man' he, of course, includes both sexes. But perhaps his words are in a special sense true of woman. The woman who offends not in speech will be a very perfect one indeed. I say this in no cynical spirit, but merely because the very nature of a woman's life, and the genius with which Providence has endowed her sex, exposes her more than men to the seductions of the tongue. Hence if, 'in spite of all temptations,' our Christian sister succeeds in bringing that unruly member under perfect control, this victory implies so much self-denial, and so many other Christian virtues, as to form a very strong presumption that there is little else amiss with her.

2. By en-
couraging
detraction
in others.

Nor is charity in *conducting* or *guiding* conversation the greatest difficulty. It is even harder to *listen* so as to avoid being drawn into detraction. A person who hardly ever *starts* pulling others to pieces will often end by taking part in such conversation when started by others. So, in order to clear up this double problem as far as possible, let me call attention to a few principles which may

¹ St. James iii. 2.

serve as guides to my readers along the somewhat narrow path of charity with justice.

Notice, then—

1. For detraction *injury* is required. I do not mean that injury must actually result, for some people are such giddy gossips that no sensible person trusts to what they report. But the thing said must be reasonably *calculated* to injure the people spoken of.¹

Condi-
tions for
real de-
traction :
(a) Injury
must be
done.

From this it follows that my neighbour must *have* a good name to lose. One cannot rob a man of what he has already forfeited by his own mis-doing. If I say of a *noted* toper that I have just seen him the worse for drink in his house, this is not *detraction*; for he has already lost his character for temperance. Yet, observe, he may still have a good name for other qualities—*e.g.*, honesty in business. So, although I and one or two others may know privately that he is a *thief* as well as a tippler, it would be detraction to publish the fact.

2. Then, there are *classes* of men known to be given to certain faults, and to point them out in an individual belonging to the class is no *detraction*. People take the defect for granted, and hardly mind it. It would scarcely be defamation to say of Captain Uriah Bunk, skipper of the brig *Mary Anne*, that I heard him blending his orders to the

¹ What is said of *persons* applies equally to bodies of men, public institutions, and with greater force, since the harm done by slandering, *e.g.*, a college or orphanage, is more far-reaching. Besides the injury to *corporate reputation*, great temporal loss may be caused by alienating the public mind from public institutions.

crew with a strong seasoning of blood, sulphur, and profanity.

(b) Person spoken of must be more or less known.

3. Further, since a man's fame, good or bad, has its existence only in the minds of those who know him, or of him, it has no universal extension throughout the world. To say, on my return from Australia, that, *unknown* to the public there, one Tom Jakes had just run off with his neighbour's wife would be no detraction, since he has no fame, good, bad, or indifferent, in London where he is quite unknown. The case would be different were T. J. a man of public mark enjoying a good reputation which extended by report even to the mother-country.

(c) Must have forfeited good repute.

4. When a person has *publicly* forfeited his good name in one place, it is no *injustice* (*notice*, I do not say it is not *uncharitable*) to reveal his misdeeds somewhere else. The reason is that, once a thing becomes generally known in one place, the report will be sure to spread itself abroad through human intercourse, and so is virtually public in all places. This is specially true in these days of rapid communication and much travelling. An *exception* must nevertheless be made where the fault is known only within *some closed circle*, or corporation—say, in a family or religious community—whence it is not likely to be allowed to leak out. Suppose that a religious had been guilty of some offence in a monastery or convent, and I have discovered the fact on a visit there. It would be detraction to spread the news even in the same town, and thus add to detraction the guilt of

creating a scandal. For the offender probably retains his or her reputation before the general public in the neighbourhood of the religious house.

5. From what has been said, it will be clear that a particular person's being ignorant of the fault which I reveal to him about another will not, of itself, make detraction, provided it be generally known to others. Some people lead such secluded lives that they hear little of what is passing outside.

6. But we must remember that a good character previously lost may often be *retrieved* in course of time. The memory of the scandal may have died out. In such a case no one is justified in *reviving* what has been well-nigh forgotten.

The fiendish malice of such a course hardly needs proving. Yet we occasionally witness such wickedness. B., some poor servant or employé, once had the misfortune to misbehave seriously. The offence has been repented of, and a fresh start has been made at a distance from the scene of the scandal. B. has succeeded, with much difficulty and after much suffering and want, in obtaining a respectable place, and with God's grace is going on most satisfactorily. Suddenly an acquaintance of the bad old days appears in the town, and, recognising the former culprit, makes it a holy duty (!) to throw out dark hints to the penitent's fellow-workers or employers that if they only knew B.'s past they would quickly show B. the door; and perhaps they do it. And poor B.,

(d) The fault must be generally unknown,

(e) Or not forgotten.

The malice of reviving scandals.

pursued and hunted out of a safe refuge, despairs, and falls back into the gutter. This sort of thing, in all its varied forms, can only be described as sheer wickedness.

Worldly
Pharisees.

Louis Veuillot wrote of Christ's mercy to Magdalen : ' The world is either relentlessly severe or unblushingly indulgent.' He did not mean, I fancy, to decry the displeasure with which a healthy public opinion visits certain grave offences against morals. It might be unwise to blame men for making the path of moral recovery *somewhat* arduous. For this acts as a wholesome deterrent from crime. Except for some such moral boycotting — at all events till reform be proved genuine—public morals would be far worse than they are. But the fervid French writer just quoted probably meant to inveigh rather against guilty *extremes*, of which one may often witness very glaring examples. People who would cast up their eyes in pharisaic horror at the thought of befriending a fallen brother or sister, who is willing and eager to reform, will gladly welcome to their very homes, *as fit companions for their wives and daughters*, smart women who have defied, and still go on openly defying, the first laws of matrimonial decency.

The
charitable
mean.

There is a mean between these two loathsome extremes, and the choicest blessings of the Sacred Heart will surely fall in plenty upon those truly Christian mistresses, employers, or friends, who *with all due precautions, and without damage to other sacred claims*, are ready to extend a helping, pitying

hand to characterless servants, workers, or others, who would fain put a sinful past behind them. This is truly a Christ-like deed of mercy of which He, who declined to condemn the sinning wife, has set us the example. It is, besides, a worthy imitation of the long-suffering patience of Our Lord *with our own back-slidings*.

Listening to Detraction.—There is a difference between *hearing* detraction—a thing hardly possible to avoid in this world of chatter, even were one bound to avoid it—and *listening* to it. By *listening* I mean (1) *taking active interest* in what is said—*enjoying it*. If this be done out of positive *hatred* to the person defamed, a mortal sin will be committed—*i.e.*, always provided the matter spoken of be calculated to injure seriously the subject of gossip. St. Paul says of charity that it ‘rejoiceth not in iniquity.’¹ Mere *curiosity*, that morbid satisfaction which some minds take in learning secret things or secret crimes, will not amount to *mortal* sin, malice being absent. The moral is to be much on one’s guard when talk turns upon the doings of those whom we greatly *dislike*, or of whom we are very *jealous*, either for their natural or their spiritual gifts. We are less likely to offend when our favourites are discussed—‘Even the heathens’ have this much virtue.²

The worst form of listening to detraction consists (2) in *leading people on to detraction* by curious inquiries into the misdoings of others. Now, this amounts to *mortal* sin where the fault thus ferreted

Co-operation in detraction.

Curious gossip.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

² St. Matt. v. 47.

out seriously lowers the character, unless, on account either of the usual prudence of the person in question, or the good name of the person discussed, we *never expected* to hear anything of great importance. In the latter case the fault would be venial. For here Paul Pry (or his sister Paulina) does not *foresee* the grievous result of curious questioning. But no such excuse will avail a person who encourages the irresponsible babbling of a noted chatterbox, capable of saying *anything*.

When is
detraction
grievous?

Now, dear friends, you may like to have some *general rules* by which to judge of the *gravity* of detraction, or calumny.

1. For mortal sin it is not necessary that a character should be *utterly blasted*, any more than, for a mortal sin of theft, the person robbed need be reduced to *beggary*. A *notable lowering* of character suffices for grievous guilt.

2. Speaking generally, the fault revealed must be *mortally* sinful in its nature. But this rule has its exceptions. A character may be notably lowered in the eyes of men without this. Thus, though *lying* is not necessarily a mortal sin, nevertheless I take it that to say (in England, at least) that so-and-so is 'a regular liar,' implying that no one can believe a word he says, would be a notable detraction, always supposing that the fault is not already generally known. It probably would be if true, and hence a mortal sin of this sort could hardly be committed except in the form of *calumny*. So, also, to speak of a servant as *dishonest* may amount

to mortal sin, although there are numerous forms of venial dishonesties, on account of the injury done to the servant's chance of getting a place.

3. To say in general terms, 'So-and-so is proud, vain, irritable, selfish, stingy, wanting in religious spirit,' etc., would not exceed a *venial* sin, since there are heaps of *venial* sins committed in these kinds, and no *mortal* ones are definitely imputed. But, on the contrary, to impute unchastity or blasphemy would always be grievous, because, supposing knowledge, advertence, and full consent in the offender, such sins are always *mortal*, and reflect great discredit upon the doers thereof in the minds of right-thinking people.

4. Then, even when the charge made is not serious *in itself*, it may become so on account of the character or position of the person defamed—say, because he is an ecclesiastical person, a priest, or a religious. Faults that are scarce noticed in others stand out as dark blots against the background of the holiness rightly looked for in those consecrated to God's service.

5. People sometimes ask: 'Is it wrong to expose the faults of *public* men—politicians, statesmen, sovereigns?' In reply, a distinction must be drawn between their reputation *as public men*—*i.e.*, as regards their conduct of *public* duties—and their good name *in private life* as members of families, fathers, husbands, business men, etc. Whatever may be said in defence of the wholesale criticism of public characters prevailing in these newspaper days, there can be no justification for

Criticising public men.

exposing *private* misconduct, unless in some particular instance the manifest good of the State and the prevention of serious injury to public interests—to be feared from their private delinquencies—should render an exposure not only *necessary*, but *effectual* for the purpose. For if ineffectual it would be unlawful.

When
lawful to
reveal
hidden
faults.

Now we will discuss the question, 'When is it *lawful* to reveal the hidden defects of others,—I mean, of course, when is it not the sin of *detraction* to do this? For, as I have said, *charity* may be violated although no *detraction* be committed.

Such revelation of our neighbour's defects is sometimes *lawful*, sometimes even *obligatory*, in order to prevent harm either to the offender himself, or to others who are in danger of suffering injury from his misdoings.

Parents
and their
children's
faults.

1. *Parents* may lawfully tell each other—but not the whole clan in all its branches—the faults of their children. This is often necessary for taking counsel together for the purpose of correction. So, also, a *religious Superior*, although not allowed to publish to the community the hidden defects of subjects, may consult in private with one or two discreet members for the remedy of abuses—unless the knowledge has been obtained through the voluntary frankness of the offender—either in confession or in some other way which calls for secrecy. *Teachers* should notice that it is *detraction* to make the secret failings of their charges common property; for a child has no less a right to its good name than the teacher.

2. For the sincere purpose of obtaining *advice* Confidences. or *comfort* in doubt, distress, suffering, temptation, Caution etc., one may reveal even the serious fault of needed. another to a trusty and prudent friend, when this is necessary for the end in view. But two cautions are needed to save this natural right from abuse. I must not go about telling half a dozen people—to each, of course, ‘as a dead secret,’ and ‘to get your advice.’ That is only thinly-veiled gossip and detraction. Then, again, because I happen to be talking with a priest or a religious person, this of itself does not set me at liberty to tell all sorts of evil about my neighbour. At the same time, no *grievous* sin will be committed when I am assured of the prudence and secrecy of my confidant. The reason why even such private gossip about another’s fault is sinful in some degree lies in the fact that everyone has a right to his good name in the mind of *each one* of his neighbours.

3. I may be *bound*, at least in charity, to reveal another’s serious fault to a person who would otherwise suffer injury unless warned. When bound to reveal faults.

In giving ‘characters’ to servants or others, Giving ‘characters.’ though I am not usually obliged in conscience to volunteer a full list of their shortcomings, I *am* bound not to give an *untrue recommendation*. If asked point-blank, I may decline to answer, and state generally that I can say nothing more in their praise, or whatever is absolutely necessary and sufficient to prevent injury to the mistress or employer who inquires. If I happen to hold some position of responsibility towards the inquirer,

justice as well as charity may oblige me to put them on their guard. The case of a housekeeper in a family who is asked her opinion by the mistress as to the fitness of some applicant for employment might be an example of this. Sometimes I might be bound *of my own accord*, and without being asked, to communicate privately to the person chiefly concerned a serious defect of another: for example, that a governess or nurse was cruel, or suffered from some catching malady, or was coarse in conduct or language, or unsound in her religious views, or any other serious defect that would cause harm to children committed to her charge. Or, again, it might be my duty to warn a mother against the *secret* unfitness or viciousness of a suitor for her daughter's hand, when a most unhappy marriage would be the probable outcome of the match, unless relatives, who have a *prior* duty to speak, are fully aware of the fact.

How far
am I
bound to
stop de-
traction?

Prevention of Detraction.—Tender consciences are often sore perplexed to know how far they are obliged to check or hinder a person who is talking, or seems about to talk, detraction to them. They wonder how far they are bound to show disapproval when 'murder is out,' or evidently about to discover itself.

Always remembering what has been said above about the difference between merely hearing detraction and *listening* to it actively, the general rule to adopt is this: I am bound to prevent or check detraction *when I easily can*.

But though I neglect to do so, it will not be a *mortal* sin unless I foresee that some *further* ill effect will result from the defamation. In spite, however, of the said general rule, there are various reasons which will excuse me even from *venial* neglect of duty, for example, if I remain passive from timidity and shyness (which is not the same as mere human respect), or if I judge that my zealous effort will bear no fruit, or perhaps only provoke the tattler to greater excess, out of defiance and resentment at my interfering. And, commonly speaking, any check administered to a detractor *before other people* will fail of its effect—but not always when given in private conversation with a well-known friend. There are some people who have an exceptional power of influencing others easily and without exciting opposition.

Then, scrupulous people should remember that rash judgment is as much a sin as detraction. Hence, they have no business to take for granted (without reason derived, *e.g.*, from former experience) that this particular person is either *going* to detract, or that their mention of the fault is really detraction. The matter may be public knowledge, although not known as such to the people listening to the speaker.

Good manners, which suggest my not breaking into a conversation which I hear, but which is *not addressed to me*, will excuse me from interfering.

I am not bound to *allude pointedly* to the fault being committed by the detractor; that would

even appear somewhat uncharitable. Nor am I bound to *lecture* my equals. Still less is it my business to reprove those considerably above me in age or position. And since such deference to my betters may reasonably be expected of me, my silence cannot be rightly taken for approval. I have no general commission to pose as a censor of public morals—a truth the better remembrance of which would save much loss of peace to scrupulous souls themselves, and much temper in their victims.

In practice, interference rarely a duty.

Thus, anxious minds may reassure themselves with the thought that, *in practice*, and owing to one circumstance or another, their duty to restrain detractors is *by no means of frequent occurrence*. They will very seldom be bound to act under pain of *mortal* sin, and not often of *venial*, though the detraction in progress be undoubted and grievous. It is different for persons having some *charge* or *responsibility*, such as parents, pastors, educators, etc. These will be bound to check those subject to them when other people are not, and sometimes under *mortal* sin.

Nor is the *degree* of restraint upon detractors which a person is obliged to exercise very great, when the duty to do *something* is clear. The slightest and most indirect means is sufficient to save all sin. A passing look (which need not be of the sourest), or a look conveying dissent, lack of interest and curiosity in the unsavoury narrative, an excuse put in for the person found fault with, defence of his motives, toning down the amount of discredit which the detractor would fain attach

to the fault—in short, any device by which I show that I am not *siding* with the detractor. Perhaps the easiest of all ways is dexterously to guide the talk into another channel. How skilful we are in putting people off the scent when, in conversation, they are getting on the track of our *own* misdeeds or shortcomings, or any matter which we do not wish to be discussed !

Why not—especially you, my Christian sisters—use some of the admitted *tact* of your sex, in such emergencies, for protecting your *neighbour's* interests ?

To conclude, we need some strong incentive to observe the law of justice with charity. For though it be not so difficult to avoid big sins in this point, the task of being perfectly charitable and just in our daily intercourse is one of the hardest allotted to us. Our Lord's example should be a powerful aid to us in this difficulty. For in His life, and above all in His Sacred Passion, He gives us the most heroic examples of charity under those strongest of all provocations to the heart of man—deepest ingratitude and grossest injustice.

The
charity of
the Sacred
Heart.

For instance, with what exceeding care did He not screen the character of that black-hearted traitor, Judas, to the very last ! All the disciples assembled at the Last Supper sought eagerly to know who the villain was that had conceived in his heart the crime of betraying their beloved Master. The hidden culprit himself feigned to join in their search—an additional provocation to Our Lord's patience and charity. Peter signed to

John—who leant upon the breast of Jesus—that he should find out the dread secret. Our Lord, in the ever-growing sorrow of His Heart, whispered to *one confidential friend*, John: ‘He it is to whom I shall reach the bread dipped.’ And after dipping the morsel He gave it to Judas.¹ Even so, Peter seems neither to have heard the guarded answer of Our Lord, nor to have understood the meaning of His act, or else, with his usual impulsive loyalty, we may be sure he would quickly have raised a perfect storm of indignation against the culprit. And even when Judas was on the point of departing from the chamber in order to carry out his wicked bargain with the Sanhedrim, his deeply-injured Master so spoke to him as to cover his criminal retreat. His words were such that, as the Gospel tells us, they seemed to refer to some errand of business or charity with which Judas was charged. For he kept the purse. Could Our Lord have read us a more forcible lesson in reverence for the *public* reputation of those whom we know nevertheless to be secretly unworthy!

On the other hand, Magdalen’s irregularities were *common knowledge*. They were the talk of the city. So, had Simon the Pharisee, besides carping at her in his own mind, openly condemned her before all his guests—as she crouched bowed down with shame and grief at the feet of Christ—he would have committed no *detraction*. Nevertheless Our Lord, who read the censorious thoughts of his host, reproached him for his uncharitable

¹ St. John xiii. 26.

criticism, and, moreover, took up the defence of the penitent, making her out in many points far better than her self-righteous critic. A strong lesson to be charitable towards our neighbour's faults, though there be no question of *detraction* on account of their publicity, and to befriend fallen sinners in their efforts to rise.

And as for seeking some excuse for the worst offenders, did not Our Lord teach us to stretch charity of this sort to its utmost limits, when He pleaded for His revilers, His butchers and murderers: 'Father, forgive them, *for they know not what they do* !'

The Church of God has caught up this spirit of ^{Charity of the Church.} the Sacred Heart. Except He had inspired her so to do, how could she dare to carry respect for the characters of the unworthy to such a pitch as to forbid her celebrating priest to publicly withhold His own Most Holy Body and Blood from a communicant at the rails whom he may privately know almost certainly to be unfit to receive them? In the same spirit, she strictly forbids the confessor to inquire from a penitent the name of his partner in crime, even for the zealous purpose of reclaiming the accomplice. She also permits her theologians to teach that a penitent may confess a sin less completely if a full confession of its exact nature would enable the priest to identify the accomplice.

Then, dear friends, does it not behove you and me, as followers of Christ and children of His spiritual Bride, to strive for charity and justice in speaking of our neighbour?

PART II.

THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

No. XXIX.

INTRODUCTION: THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.¹

HITHERTO we have been dealing with the Decalogue, or those Commandments delivered by God to man with His own Divine lips on Sinai, and recorded, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the pages of the Old Testament. Now we turn to another set of commands given to us by the Catholic Church of Christ, in the name—and by the authority—of her Divine Founder.

The
Church
morally
Christ's
other self.

Before, however, discussing these ecclesiastical precepts, it is important that we should understand clearly the power which they have to bind the consciences of Christians under pain of sin. This is only another way of saying that we must realize to the full that Christ Our Lord has given authority to the Rulers of His Church to command us in religious and spiritual matters, and has at the same time imposed upon us the duty of obeying. We have this truth set forth in His own words addressed to the Apostles: 'He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth

¹ For authority of the Church in relation to matrimonial laws, see Vol. iii., p. 142, and Appendix iii., last paragraph.

you despiseth Me.¹ Now, there can be no doubt about the sinfulness of turning a deaf ear to an express command of the Son of God, and of despising Him, yet He plainly states that to act thus towards His Church comes precisely to the same thing. In other words, Our Lord established a complete oneness between Himself and His Church, both as to the right of commanding and as to the duty of subjects to obey.

There are few truths which need to be more constantly enforced in these days than the *reality* of the authority of the Church, the equal reality of the sin committed by him who disregards her voice, and of the punishments of God incurred by disobedience to it. Even amongst Catholics some are to be found who will carefully avoid smaller offences against the Ten Commandments, but will neglect *the hearing of Mass* on a holiday of obligation, without excuse and with an easy conscience! One has no small difficulty, at times, in making them understand, for example, that to eat meat on Fridays without leave or some valid reason is as truly a *mortal* sin as, for instance, to ruin a neighbour's character or to steal a five-pound note. Any one of these offences amounts to a grievous sin, and causes the soul to forfeit God's friendship, though, clearly, they are not all equally *heinous* mortal sins. Nevertheless, they are all grave violations of that Divine Will, which is as surely notified to us by the voice of the Church commissioned by God to regulate our

The above truth needs to be realized.

¹ St. Luke x. 16.

spiritual life as by the voice of God addressing man directly.

Test of
realiza-
tion.

Have you, my readers, all of you, a firm grasp of this truth? The point can be easily tested. Do you believe that you can as certainly *lose your souls for ever* through *culpable* neglect of Mass on Sundays or holydays of obligation as by indulging in any form of vice that can be mentioned? Please God you do, for otherwise you would lack a distinctive mark of a sound Catholic—that of perceiving no essential difference in the binding force of a command, whether it proceeds directly from God's authority by a personal declaration, or comes indirectly from Him through the authority which He has bestowed upon His Church for the government of our souls. To a truly enlightened Catholic this difference in the immediate source of the command is purely an accidental one—merely a difference in the *channel* through which one and the same Divine Will reaches him. When a father shares with another his parental authority over a son, any disobedience to the appointed guardian on the son's part amounts to disobedience towards the parent.

The application is obvious. Moreover, we obtain our right understanding of the duties contained in the Ten Commandments of God *from the teaching of the Church*, so that, practically speaking, we could have no assurance of observing even these rightly except we relied upon that *same* Church authority which commands us in other matters. Perhaps some Catholic may say: 'Of

course we must keep the Ten Commandments, as explained to us from our childhood. But it does not matter so much about attending Mass on Ascension Day or All Saints, nor about observing abstinence on Fridays.' Such a frame of mind is utterly inconsistent, since the same Divine authority underlies *both* sets of commandments. Hence, ordinary logic requires us to observe both or neither. To discriminate between them as regards their binding force is altogether unreasonable.

The Church was established by Jesus Christ not only to teach and explain unerringly the revealed Law of God, but also to make laws for the spiritual good of her subjects. Thus, Our Lord said to the Apostles in general: 'Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in Heaven.'¹

Power of
Church to
bind con-
sciences.

In these words Our Saviour authorizes the rulers of His Church to bind us morally by means of laws, and likewise to release us from obligations imposed by law. The whole end and purpose for which He founded the Church was to forward the spiritual interests of souls in this world, and so to guide them to Heaven hereafter. Such, then, being the *duty* assigned to the Church by Christ, she must also have received from Him the corresponding *right* and *power* to make such laws as she sees to be necessary for securing those interests.

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 18.

As a complete and independent spiritual kingdom the Church is competent to make such laws. In other words, she is endowed by her Divine Founder with *legislative* as well as *teaching* authority. Thus, while she exercises her power to 'teach all nations' when explaining the Ten Commandments of God, and claims our assent to her teaching, she makes use besides of her authority—equally received from Christ—when framing other laws of her own, and lawfully claims our whole-hearted obedience to them.

Hearty
approval
of Church
laws.

But our duty towards Church legislation does not end with mere obedience. Since the Church of Christ has the promise of infallibility for her moral guidance as well as for her doctrinal teaching, it forms part of a Catholic's duty to recognise as *good* and *righteous* the laws which the Church makes for the conduct of all her subjects. For if they could be morally bad the Church would be capable of leading her entire flock morally astray, and so her *infallibility* in morals would cease.

To come now to closer quarters with our subject.

Analysis
of ecclesi-
astical
Precepts.

It may be noticed that the Commandments of the Church are somewhat differently stated in Catechisms used in various parts of the Catholic world. Thus, in some places the *giving of tithes*, or 'tenth-parts,' to the Church appears on the list. This is not the case in our English Catechism, but we find instead a general com-

mand to contribute towards the support of spiritual pastors.

Does this mean, it may be asked, that the religious teaching of the Church differs in different lands? Not so; for, first of all, there is no question here of doctrine, but of legislation in a matter of practical detail. The obligation of giving 'tents' has become obsolete in places, a contrary custom having legitimately obtained; hence the duty of supporting the clergy *in this particular form* is no longer enforced. A difficult.

As a matter of fact, all the many ecclesiastical laws may be considered as commandments, and might all be printed as such in our Catechisms. But for brevity's sake, and as being more practical, it is usual to select for special notice only (1) those few laws which bind all Catholics alike; (2) one or two others of more general, but still not universal, application—as, for example, the Sixth Commandment of the Church relating to matrimony.

I propose in these pages to deal chiefly with those precepts of religious observance which are obligatory for all Catholics, whatever their state of life.

These, although spread out in our English Catechism under five separate heads, may here be conveniently summed up under three:

1. The Commandment to hear Mass on certain days.

2. That enjoining external penance for sin in the shape of fasting or abstinence.

3. The Commandment to fulfil the 'Easter duties,' as they are popularly called, or Confession and Holy Communion, once a year, about Easter-time.¹

Church's
small
demands.

The shortness of this list suggests to us the reflection that Holy Mother Church is exceedingly moderate in her spiritual demands upon the generality of her children. She does not lay upon them many serious burdens.

'Catholic
religion so
difficult.'

This is a truth which may usefully be impressed upon the minds of some non-Catholics who feel drawn towards the Catholic Faith. Such will sometimes remark: 'I should rather like to belong to your Church, only yours is such a very *complicated* religion! There are so many things you have to do, and I could never manage them all.'

A mistake
of non-
Catholics

Probably such objectors, in forming an estimate of our faith, lack a due sense of proportion. I mean that they confuse together a large number of Catholic observances as being all of equal moment and necessity, whereas they are not. They seem to make no distinction between numerous devout practices, which are not at all essential, but quite free and optional, and other practices which are of grave obligation, but very few in number.

Difference
between
obliga-
tion and
free devo-
tion.

Thus, an outsider may wrongly fancy that reciting the rosary, using holy water, assisting at Benediction, kneeling before statues to pray,

¹ For duty to support Pastors, see Fourth Commandment of Decalogue, p. 202.

devotions to particular Saints, etc., stood on the same level with the strict obligation to hear Mass on Sundays and holydays, or to receive Holy Communion at Easter, which, of course, is an error.

The three headings given above contain the only duties of religious observance imposed by the Church upon all Catholics without distinction, and of these one only could fairly be considered complicated, namely, the law of fasting. The various rules governing this penitential practice may be, no doubt, somewhat perplexing to the mind of a recent convert; but a good will and average intelligence will soon overcome the difficulty.

To conclude these introductory remarks. The mystery of the Purification of Our Lady and presentation of her Divine Child, celebrated by the Church on the second day of February, presents us with a powerful motive for obeying every law coming to us with Divine sanction. As we call to mind on that feast, Jesus submitted Himself to the law of Moses by His Presentation in the Temple. Mary, too, obeyed the humbling and irksome law of Purification. Both might well have claimed to be excused, Jesus because, as the Supreme Lawgiver, He was above the law. Besides, as the Child of Mary, who was not to be spared from death, but to be delivered up for us all, there was no call for His being bought back with offerings as other firstborn sons of Jewish parents had to be, in return for the *sparing* of each eldest-born

on the night of Israel's delivery from Egypt. And Mary, the pure and spotless Virgin, rendered a thousand times more holy by her Divine maternity, how could she need purification? Why, then, did both obey the law? For no other purpose, clearly, than to set us an example of *obedience without excuse*. Let us imitate it by reverencing and fulfilling every precept of God and of His Church, not allowing trivial reasons to hinder us from their exact observance.

THE FIRST PRECEPT

No. XXX.

OBSERVANCE OF HOLYDAYS.

'To keep Sundays and holydays of obligation holy by hearing Mass and resting from servile work.'

HAVING just dwelt upon our duty of obeying the commands which the Church gives us for our spiritual good, I will now discuss with you the *first* of these Commandments.

But no lengthened discussion will be needed, since the substance of this precept, as far as it relates to *Sundays*, has already been treated under the Third Commandment of the Decalogue.¹ There are, however, a few matters which belong more properly to this place.

You see *two* kinds of days are here mentioned : Two sets of days for observance. (1) Sundays ; (2) certain other holydays, some of which—*i.e.*, those fixed to a particular date, like All Saints—may coincide with a Sunday, and others which never do, being 'movable' feasts, like Ascension and Corpus Christi Days.

How comes it, someone may ask, that the duties of hearing Mass and resting from work are mentioned *twice* over in the Catechism—that is, Why referred to twice in Catechism both under the Third Commandment of the

¹ See p. 145.

Decalogue, and again here, under the Ecclesiastical Precepts? The reason is, as regards *Sundays*, that the command to hear Mass comes partly from God, and partly from the Church speaking in His Name. As we saw when examining the Decalogue, God commanded the Jews to keep the seventh day religiously; and now, under the Christian Law, the Church of Christ, armed with His authority, points out the *way* in which Christians are to carry out this religious observance. Hence the latter, as far as it concerns the Sunday, only comes under the Commandments of the Church *partially*, while as attached to *holydays*, it belongs to these *exclusively*.

Non-observance of holydays a mortal sin.

But though these holydays are of purely ecclesiastical origin, not on this account is their neglect to be deemed of comparatively small importance or as a trifling sin. To miss Mass, or to work needlessly on these days, is as much a *mortal* sin, by which Heaven may be lost, as it would be on Sundays. No one will gather any different impression who has well weighed what was said in the preceding Letter about Christ's command that we should 'hear' the Church even as we would Himself.

Obligation rests on legitimate authority.

The appointment of these extra days for special worship is no more than a legitimate use on the Church's part of the authority she has received from her Divine Head for guiding the religious life of her children and His as she sees best for their spiritual welfare.

It is obvious, however, that in lands where the

nation's life pursues its workaday course in entire oblivion of Catholic requirements, Catholics will often find great difficulty in observing holydays that fall on week-days, even as to hearing Mass. The reasons that lawfully excuse us from due observance have been previously discussed under the Ten Commandments.¹ But considering how frequently just excuses arise in the case of holydays, Catholics need to be careful lest the habit of not observing them, when there is good excuse, should lead them to keep up the habit when the legitimate excuse *ceases to exist*.

The Days of Obligation.—On July 2, 1911, Pope Pius X. issued his Motu Proprio, 'Supremi Disciplinæ.' Its ruling purpose was *to reduce the number of holydays of obligation* in the different countries, and produce greater uniformity. This was a thoughtful concession to the altered conditions of the world in the spheres of commerce and labour. The new list of holydays, as laid down in the said Motu Proprio and left unaltered by the later decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rights of July 24, 1911, omitted Corpus Christi; and the Catholic Episcopate of England and Wales judged it well not to apply for its re-instatement as a day of obligation, though the Motu Proprio left them free to do so. Hence the feast of Corpus Christi has ceased to be for us a holyday of obligation. Its outward solemnities, however, have been officially transferred to the following Sunday, as, indeed, it had already been common to do in our

Excusing
causes and
their
danger.

Which
are the
days of
obliga-
tion?

¹ See page 148.

THE SECOND PRECEPT.

No. XXXI.

FASTING AND ABSTINENCE.

‘To keep the appointed days of fasting and abstinence.’

To the intelligent Catholic a penitential precept of this sort can hardly appear strange. This criticism may, however, suggest itself to him—that, since comparatively few people fast nowadays, a Letter on fasting can have but an academic interest for the majority of my readers. True it is that in these busy, struggling, nerve-consuming days a large proportion of good Catholics are unequal to performing properly their daily duties on a fasting diet, and hence the greater number, perhaps, have cause for exemption, or else for obtaining a dispensation. This is specially the case in our colder, damper Northern climate, while to the inhabitant of the sunnier South fasting, with its restriction on the quantity of food allowed, causes no great hardship, since at no time is he a copious eater. But the precept entails no small privation and discomfort in the case of a Britisher or German. Still, fasters do survive amongst us—all honour to them—and to such my observations may prove of some service.

On the other hand, to non-Catholics, and

possibly to some less-instructed members of the Church, the laws of fasting and abstinence may appear meaningless. 'What reasonable purpose can be served by curtailing my usual allowance of food? What can be the use of depriving myself of flesh-meat? Do you mean to say that Almighty God delights in the discomfort or suffering of His creatures? Has He not given us the good things of earth for our use and enjoyment?' These and like questions are often put as arguments against the penitential laws of the Catholic Church. But, in truth, it was not the Church that took the lead in enjoining the duty of mortification and self-denial. All she has done is to fix the *way* in which Our Lord's own example and teaching in this matter shall be carried out by her children. It was Christ Himself Who set the example by His fast of forty days in the desert; it was Our Lord Who declared: 'He who would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.'

The religious object and advantage to be secured by penitential deeds mortifying to the flesh is, one would think, sufficiently obvious: namely, that of keeping the desires of the animal portion of our human nature under due control by thwarting them even in things otherwise lawful, in order that they may not gain the upper hand of reason.

God has indeed given many good gifts to men for their use and gratification. Nevertheless, since the fall of Adam, with its attendant loss to man of his original justice, human nature has ever tended

Objections to
bodily
penance.

Their
object:
1. To
subdue
passions.

Self-
denial
necessary
for fallen
men.

towards abuse and excess in the handling of these Divine benefits. Hence it stands in constant need of the curb of abstinence. It is not merely intemperance or gluttony that the present precept combats, but all passions of our lower nature. More than this: self-restraint of any kind adds force and vigour to the will—a useful provision against temptations of every sort.

Penance a means, not an end.

Needless to say, it is not human pain *as such* that pleases God, but the virtue and advance in holiness which suffering tends to foster in the Christian soul. Just as Almighty God does not desire human distress for its own sake, so, too, it would be irrational for us to seek it *as an object in itself*. It is a *means*, and not an *end*, an aid to virtue, not virtue itself. The *mere fact* that a thing is unpleasant to our natural feelings can be no sufficient reason for embracing it—obviously, rather the reverse. To argue, as good people do at times, ‘That is disagreeable, *therefore* I ought to do it,’ is unreasonable. Right reason requires that there should be some good object to be secured *beyond* the unpleasantness itself.

A false comparison.

Here we see the difference, the essential difference, between the gruesome self-torture of the Indian fakir, and the self-imposed austerities of Catholic Saints, which, however, we have sometime seen put forward by non-Catholic writers as manifestations of one and the same senseless spirit of fanaticism. The Catholic ascetic mortifies himself, not for *mortification’s sake*, but with a view to some *ulterior* and *virtuous* end, while the fanatic

derives a morbid satisfaction from self-inflicted pain as meritorious *in itself*, or perhaps seeks merely to obtain praise for holiness, or liberal alms, from his fellow-creatures.

Again, it is part of the wondrous efficacy of ^{2. Atonement for} Christ's Atonement for men on Calvary that the ^{sin.} Christian is enabled through Him to atone for his own sins by personal acts of penance. As we know from the doctrine of Indulgences, heavy amends may still be due to Divine Justice, for sin committed, even after a sinner has been substantially restored to the friendship of God through repentance and sacramental absolution. Satisfaction must be made to the full, and if this be not accomplished on earth by penance, the debt will stand over to be paid in Purgatory to the last farthing, before the soul can enter Heaven. Thus we have two excellent reasons for penitential acts like those enjoined by the present precept: the establishment of the control of reason over our lower nature, and the doing of satisfaction for sin.

There yet remains a still higher and nobler ^{3. Union with} motive for penitential suffering, and we see it ^{Christ.} exemplified in the lives of those who have excelled in personal love for Our Blessed Lord, namely, that of becoming more like to their suffering Master and Model by freely embracing suffering. 'It is enough for the servant that he be as his master is.' Filled with this spirit of self-sacrificing love, St. Catherine of Siena freely chose the crown of thorns instead of the crown of roses, because the former had encircled the brow of her beloved

Saviour, although given to understand that she might please God equally in either case. But it is, rather, the other two motives for penance that will probably appeal to us ordinary mortals.

I. FASTING.

First let us clearly understand in what sense this term is here used.

Two kinds
of fasts.

There are two kinds of *fasts* known to Catholic theology: the *natural* fast—that observed by communicants, starting from midnight preceding their Communion, and which consists in refraining literally from every kind of food or drink. We are not now dealing with this *natural* fast, but with the *ecclesiastical* fast, which, without forbidding all food, chiefly limits its quantity, while it places no restraint, beyond that which temperance already imposes, upon drinking in its ordinary sense.¹ The term *fasting* is sometimes used in a wider sense, so as to include *abstinence*—that is, it is taken in the general sense of refraining from food whether in *quantity* or in *kind*; and, except for a grant or dispensation to the contrary, the obligation to abstain from flesh-meat, and from products of those animals which supply flesh-meat (*i.e.*, eggs, cheese, etc.), forms part of the law of fasting. But here we employ ‘fasting’ in the

¹ The *fast* observed by some Anglicans before their Communion and ‘celebrations’ approaches nearer to the *ecclesiastical* than to the *natural* fast—a cup of tea or other light refreshment being held lawful—while others of the more advanced type adopt our *natural* fast on such occasions.

strictest acceptation of the word, namely, as limiting the *quantity* of food allowed. *Abstinence* more properly means refraining from food of a particular *quality*—that is, flesh-meat, and foods allied to it—while taking the usual number of full meals.

The *essence of a fast* lies in taking only *one* full meal in the twenty-four hours. Originally no food at all was allowed at any other time in the day. But in the course of centuries certain mitigations were introduced, and now, besides the one *full* meal, two other slighter ones are permitted to the faster: viz., the morning *morsel* or mouthful, in lieu of a proper breakfast, and a 'collation,' or more liberal, but still *partial*, meal, in place of supper. This supposes *dinner*, or the one full meal, to be taken about the middle of the day.

But it is quite lawful to invert the order, and to take 'collation' as a *luncheon* in the middle of the day, and the full meal, or dinner, in the evening. This will naturally be the usual order for the higher classes in England, at all events, who are accustomed to dine late. Further, if a person be too weak to manage with the morning morsel (even somewhat generously calculated), he may instead take his 'collation' in the morning. There are some theologians, however, who regard this as an *extraordinary* means of keeping the law—a kind of privilege, in fact; and since no one is bound to avail himself of a privilege, they hold that a person who cannot fast except by having recourse to the same may be considered exempt from fasting altogether. They are speaking, of

The
essence of
fasting.

Inversion
of meals
allowed.

course, about strict obligation; for it is clearly more *advisable* to fast in this way than not at all, since the essence of a fast still remains unimpaired so long as only one *full* meal is taken.

Days of
fasting.

Now to deal with some details. As for the *days* of fasting, a list of these can be seen in any Catechism and in many prayer-books. Besides, a regular attendant at Sunday Mass will hear fast-days announced by the priest beforehand—that is, if the worshipper prove rather an exception, and actually attend to the notices!

Age for
same.

A Catholic comes under the law of *fasting* on his twenty-first birthday, except it coincide with a fast. For in the latter case he is clearly free to eat as usual during the part of the day which precedes the precise hour of his birth, and so to make fasting impossible for the rest of that day, though he may not choose to use his liberty.

The duty of fasting *ceases*, for men, on entering their sixtieth year, and for women, their fiftieth year.¹

The
morning
morsel.

In place of breakfast, two ounces of solid food are allowed—such as bread or toast, or other food of a kind lawful to fasters outside the one full meal. No account need be taken of the weight of *tea* or *coffee* used in preparing these beverages, but *cocoa*, still more *chocolate*, must be considered, unless the quantity of solid matter used be very small.

Theologians of weight discuss the case of a person who has, by mistake, eaten his usual breakfast on a fast-day and *considerably* exceeded

¹ See Appendix C.

the faster's 'morsel.' They say that, since his error was involuntary, he may ignore it, and still take his one full meal and collation without detracting from either by way of compensation.

At 'collation,' the quantity of solid food is limited Collation. to *eight ounces*—such is the custom amongst us. But some special reason—*e.g.*, exceptional need of more nourishment, severity of climate, etc.—would justify two *additional* ounces. Any notable excess beyond this limit would be a violation of the fast, and, if needed by the faster on account of physical weakness, would form a just ground for *exemption* or for seeking a *dispensation*.¹ It is not necessary to weigh the quantity of food with mathematical accuracy.

Quality of Food.—In this matter two points Kinds of food allowed. should be considered: 1. What permissions are given in Indults—*e.g.*, the Lenten Indult granted by the Holy See, usually published in each diocese on the Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday (Quinquagesima Sunday). 2. What the received customs of the country, as followed by observant Catholics, tolerate. Subject to these two tests, the kind of food allowed at collation are bread, small fish, preserves, porridge, and the like.

The Chief Meal.—The question arises as to The one full meal. an interruption occurring during the meal. May

¹ There is a difference between these two. *Exemption* means that a person's circumstances exonerate him from fasting without recourse to ecclesiastical authority; while *dispensation* is a *permission* not to fast, obtained, for example, in cases of doubt as to the sufficiency of causes for exemption.

a faster return to continue it, or would the interval create two separate meals? Provided the interruption be unavoidable — *e.g.*, owing to some business or duty to be seen to—the faster may resume his meal, even though several hours may have elapsed. But if unnecessary, the interval should not exceed half an hour.

Those who have to serve, or—as in religious houses and institutions—to read at table, may fortify themselves for their tasks with some slight refreshment—*e.g.*, a plate of soup, or the like—and this may be reckoned as virtually forming part of the one full meal which they partake of afterwards.

Outside these three occasions for bodily nourishment, fasters are forbidden to take any kind of *food*—*e.g.*, fruit, honey, sweets, etc. Here, however, a clear distinction must be drawn between *food* and *drink*—one which does *not* depend upon whether what is taken be *solid* or *liquid*. For ice is solid, yet is allowed as *drink*; while beef-tea or Bovril is liquid, and yet must be ranked as *food*. Those things are forbidden as *food* which are taken chiefly for their nourishing properties, and that is to be accounted drink which is taken mainly *as a beverage*, to refresh, slake the thirst, assist digestion, etc., such as tea, coffee, lemonade, wine, and the like.

Medi-
cines.

Jujubes or lozenges, not ‘sweets,’ employed for *medicinal* or *kindred purposes*, and not for nourishment, may be used in small quantities. Medicine, properly so called, is also permissible during an

ecclesiastical fast, though *unlawful* during the *natural* fast before Holy Communion.

When drinking between meals, the faster is allowed a crust or mouthful of some other fasting food, on the old-fashioned theological principle, 'lest the drink disagree,' but, clearly, only once or twice in the day, or else fasting would become a farce.

'Lest the liquor hurt.'

The law of fasting certainly binds *under pain of mortal sin*, except a person be exempt or have a dispensation. Although it is difficult to fix exactly where grave violation begins, yet it may be laid down that, *e.g.*, taking a full breakfast, or else a full supper at 'collation,' besides the one full meal, would frustrate the law. Short of this, while it is agreed that an excess of *two ounces* would not be a grievous matter, *four ounces* are held to be so. In such a point no precise definition can be given. Small excesses in quantity at the two slighter meals, or the taking of, *e.g.*, a little fruit or a few sweets, etc., between whiles would be *venial* sins.

Guilt of violating the fast.

Once a person has—whether wilfully or through forgetfulness—taken more than one *full* meal on a fast-day, he may take his meals as usual for the rest of the twenty-four hours, for the fast has been destroyed and cannot for that day be mended. He is in a different case to one who has broken *abstinence*, the latter being still bound to continue abstaining from flesh-meat after his error.

A broken fast cannot be mended.

2. ABSTINENCE ; EXCUSING CAUSES.

Absti-
nence
only re-
stricts
quality of
food.

The law of abstinence commands us to refrain on certain days from certain *kinds* of food, while it places no restraint upon *quantity* or on the number of meals. Only temperance regulates the latter.

Theory of
abstin-
ence.

For clearness' sake we will first view this law in all its native strictness, and next take notice of the various mitigations which have gradually lessened its severity.

In its full force, then, the precept of abstinence forbids—(1) All *flesh-meat*, properly so called. (2) All *products* taken from animals supplying flesh-meat—*e.g.*, lard, dripping, suet, eggs, and milk-foods, such as milk, butter, and cheese.

Present
practice
for Eng-
land.

Nowadays, and for us, in virtue of Indults granted by Church authority, the restrictions are reduced in practice to the following: (1) Flesh-meat, properly so called, is altogether forbidden. (2) But, except during Lent, abstainers are allowed the use of milk-foods and eggs, as also lard or dripping (not suet, which is meat), if used merely as a condiment and aid to *cooking*; and even in the Lenten season these are only forbidden on certain days: Ash Wednesday, and during the latter part of Holy Week. For more exact details readers may consult the Lenten Indults published in their respective dioceses.

Flesh and
fish.

What is included under the terms 'flesh' and 'fish'? What is forbidden as flesh, and what allowed as fish? Broadly speaking, all animals living on land are regarded as supplying *flesh*-

meat, while those animals are accounted *fish* that live in the water. Betwixt and between we have amphibious animals, living in both elements—*e.g.*, turtles, crabs, etc.; and some that live *on*—but not, properly speaking, *in*—water, as well as on land, such as ducks, water-fowl, etc. How are these to be classed? I mean, of course, from a theological point of view.

Whether on account of their nature, or in virtue of legitimately prevailing custom, the following may all be classed with *fish*: turtles, tortoises, frogs, seals, lobsters, crabs, oysters, and, of course, all other shell-fish. In some countries water-fowl and snails (!) are tolerated by custom as abstainer's food. With us, however, all birds are treated as *meat*.¹

Violation of the law of abstinence, to the extent of *two ounces of meat*, strictly so called, is held to constitute a *mortal* sin; but in the case of *products*, such as eggs and milk-foods (on days when these are forbidden), *four ounces* would be necessary for *grievous* guilt—*e.g.*, two ordinary hen's eggs. Sins will be multiplied if the forbidden food be taken at *separate times*, such as cannot be considered to form, morally speaking, *one and the same occasion or meal*.

Guilt of breaking law.

Mixing Meat and Fish.—There is an additional 'Mixing.' rule forbidding *both* meat and fish to be taken *at the same meal*, which, though more closely linked with the law of abstinence, is indirectly attached to that of fasting, since it applies only to abstin-

¹ What are called water-snails would, of course, always be allowable.

ence *on fast-days*. It is, in fact, a *condition* appended to a *dispensation* to eat meat on such days, and does not hold on days of *simple abstinence*, such as ordinary Fridays in the year. For a fuller understanding of this point, it must be noticed that, although fasting and abstinence are different things, yet the obligation of fasting theoretically carries with it that of abstaining as well. It is only in virtue of a dispensation—one usually granted to all by Indult—that we are permitted to eat meat *at all* on fast-days, *e.g.*, during Lent—all the days of that season being, strictly speaking, fast-days.

This law of not ‘mixing’ applies to all *fast-days* throughout the year. It binds everyone, even those not bound to fast, and under pain of mortal sin, as Pope Benedict XIV. declared.

Since, however, this forbiddance forms part of a *dispensation* from abstinence, it does not affect those who are *exempt* from it, and hence need not to be dispensed—say, on account of sickness. But it does bind those exempt from *fasting only*—*e.g.*, those under twenty-one years—and who consequently require a *dispensation* in order to go to the further length of not *abstaining*.¹

Now to consider what are valid reasons excusing a person from fasting and from abstinence. From what we have been saying, it will be clear that we are going to speak of reasons sufficing for *exemption*, not merely for *dispensation*.

¹ For an explanation of the difference between *exemption* and *dispensation*, see foot-note to p. 339.

A. *Causes excusing from Fasting.*

1. *Moral inability* to fast, which means that, over and above the average amount of discomfort or inconvenience inherent in a law expressly designed for *bodily penance*, some *additional* and *serious* hardship attaches to its observance in the individual case, which renders the latter specially oppressive to human nature, and was not intended by the Church in framing the law.

Excusing causes.

A. Fast-ing.

Under this head of legitimate excuse come *delicacy of health*, actual sickness, state of convalescence from the same. With some, fasting causes *severe* headache, or sleeplessness at night. Either trouble would excuse from fasting. Others are unable to take much food at one time, and hence need frequent small repasts of specially nourishing food. *Poor people* are exempt, apart from the nature of their employment, who cannot procure sufficiently nourishing food, and so need to take the food they have in larger quantity. Maternity, at different stages, also supplies good reasons for not fasting.

Weak health.

2. Those who gain their livelihood by very laborious work—*e.g.*, labourers and artisans of various sorts—are also excused. It is not the intention of the Church that people should be prevented from properly pursuing their usual avocations for the sake of fasting. For, greater good would thus be hindered, and more necessary things neglected. Even if a workman were so well off as to be able to afford a day off, in order

Labour.

to be able to fast, he is not bound to stop work. Nor, again, would a workman be bound to fast during a holiday of a few days, of which he stands in need in order to fit himself for his work.

Servants. Domestic servants, unless the nature of their particular tasks be specially fatiguing, are not exempt from fasting by the mere fact of service. In particular cases, of course, weak health, or other reasons *added* to their work, will often form a just excuse.

Are travellers excused? The *mere fact that a person is travelling* does not exempt him or her from fasting. The length of the journey, the amount of fatigue it involves, and the person's strength, all need to be considered, and each case decided on its own merits.

Sportsmen. Amusements or sports involving fatigue, unless required for some other serious reason, may not be indulged in indiscriminately for mere pleasure's sake, if incompatible with fasting. But theologians of authority allow this to be done *occasionally*, on the ground that the Church can never intend that fasting should *constantly prevent* such reasonable and lawful pursuits, while, on the other hand, she would not be willing that fasting should be *frequently hindered* by them. Thus, a man, otherwise able to fast in Lent, could not lawfully neglect fast-days in order to hunt or shoot—say, two or three times a week—for mere amusement.

Fatigues of the 'season.' So, too, during the 'season,' women who, but for their laborious gaieties, could well fast may not needlessly multiply balls and other social pleasures simply out of love of amusement, and

then excuse themselves from fasting on the strength of the reaction and exhaustion resulting. There may be, and doubtless commonly are, good reasons beyond that of pleasure for a certain amount of such gaieties which would justify an *occasional* neglect of fasting; but a limit must be put. The 'season' cannot, on its own *solitary* merits, claim the rank of a theological basis for exemption. No theologian so far has acknowledged as an axiom: 'During the London season no one is expected to fast.'

3. *Greater good*, such as corporal or spiritual works of mercy and charity, when incompatible with fasting, claim precedence of it, as of higher merit and public utility. Greater good.

Hence, priests giving 'Missions,' during which they preach two or three times a day, perhaps; professors of subjects entailing much study; teachers in schools, of primary or secondary education, who undergo the great fatigue of teaching classes for several hours each day, may claim exemption.

Though hard study, the work of barristers, judges, and the like, is not held to exempt of itself, it will frequently do so on account of weakness, the difficulty of getting meals at the proper time, the risk of becoming unfit for their duties, etc.

A word or two about *seeking dispensation*.

Dispensa-
tions.

When in doubt whether he be bound to fast (or abstain), a person should not take the law into his own hands, but submit his case to the judg-

ment of his priest, who has four possible courses open to him. (1) He may declare the applicant bound to fast, or, if health be in question, refer him to a conscientious medical adviser. (2) He may declare him *exempt* from fasting (or abstinence). (3) He may *dispense* him, (4) or impose some other religious act as a substitute for fasting—a process termed *commutation*, or exchange of burdens.

Once *exemption* has been declared, or *dispensation* granted to him, he is not *bound* to renew his application so long as the circumstances which led to his being freed remain *substantially* unchanged. As an example, delicate people, who may have been *dispensed* or judged *exempt*, are liable to variations in health—have their ‘ups and downs,’ as the phrase goes; and a conscientious or a scrupulous person of this class, on experiencing temporary improvement in strength, may immediately begin to doubt the lawfulness of still using the dispensation. But such slight and passing changes do not materially alter the case. Besides, the likelihood of his being thrown back by a return to fasting, together with the mental worry of having continually to review his theological position, forms ample ground for dismissing the doubt.

B. Causes excusing from Abstinence.

Age for
abstin-
ence.

Only children who have not reached the use of reason (about the age of seven) are exempt on the sole ground of *age*. The other causes are mostly of the same general character as in the case of

fasting, but will evidently apply less widely, since there is not the same hardship in abstinence. A few detailed remarks, however, may prove useful as a guide to settling doubts that may arise.

Poor people, who seldom enjoy the luxury of The poor. flesh-meat, may take it when they get the chance, even if it be an abstinence-day. As a matter of fact, one often meets with far greater strictness in abstaining, rising at times to the pitch of heroism, amongst those forced to feed poorly than amongst the better-fed classes.

Travellers, simply as such, are *not* exempt, unless Travel-
lers. they find it very difficult to obtain sufficient nourishment on their journey without breaking abstinence, which will scarcely happen in the beaten tracks of civilized countries. They may, however, be excused on *other* grounds, similar to those set forth above in the case of fasting.

In households where the head will only provide Domestic
fare. meat on days of abstinence, the wife and the rest of the household may partake of it, since they are not in a position to order things differently. But when this is done because the *head* has a *dispensation*, it is not by any supposed *extension* of the latter to the rest of the family that meat fare becomes lawful for them, but by *necessity* only.

In poor families, the difficulty of providing both kinds of diets at meals will often justify the rest of the household joining with the *dispensed* and *exempt* member in eating meat.

By way of conclusion let me deal with one or two *perplexing cases*, of more frequent occurrence.

Perplex-
ing cases.
1. Catho-
lic guest at
Protestant
table.

1. A Catholic is invited out to lunch or dinner on a Friday by non-Catholic acquaintances, neither intimates nor relatives, who, however, he thinks will remember to provide some fare suitable for an abstainer. But as the meal progresses he finds the matter has been entirely overlooked. What is he to do?

Given that he must not eat meat, two alternatives seem to remain—either to depart with graceful apologies, or else to sit through the meal, eking out a precarious repast with bread, vegetables, and other lawful scraps.

In this case it seems lawful for him to eat meat. For the offence to the hospitable instinct of his hosts, which would often be great, and perhaps the disturbance amongst the other guests likely to result from either course, appear to be sufficiently grave reasons for taking what is set before him without remark.

Should the oversight be publicly noticed—by guests or by hosts—he would do well to prevent scandal by intimating that the course he is pursuing is compatible with Catholic principles.

2. The
cook's
mistake.

2. A Catholic household is just sitting down to dinner. Soup is served, and it is found to have been made, by the cook's error, partly of meat.

The quantity of meat consumed by each diner would be small, such as it would be at most a venial sin to take wantonly and without reasonable cause. But the inconvenience and upset involved in sending the soup away barely tasted supplies the reasonable cause necessary, and

no sin at all will be committed by finishing the soup.

But if the *whole* repast has been prepared in forgetfulness of abstinence, the lawfulness of eating it will depend upon whether it can or cannot be omitted without *serious inconvenience*, and the latter would frequently occur—*e.g.*, if it were very difficult to provide another *suitable* meal instead, if the number of mouths were large, if there were danger of a family quarrel in breaking off the meal, etc.

3. A convert son or daughter living with his or her non-Catholic family, and the object of considerable hostility, will not sin by eating meat on Fridays when those responsible decline to provide sufficient abstinence fare. Nor would he or she be bound to urge the point at the risk of a family 'shindy.'

3. The only convert in the family.

Of course the convert must not allow his yielding to be construed into a surrender of his adopted Catholic faith. But this need never be; for in many other ways the convert will make it plain that acquiescence is due to sincerely regretted necessity—*e.g.*, by an exact fulfilment of other Catholic duties.

4. I must, however, add—for fear of seeming to encourage laxity, or a sinful human respect before non-Catholics—that *people staying in non-Catholic households* are not justified in neglecting abstinence as a matter of course, on the general ground that it is usual there to take no account of abstinence. Except there be *good reason* to fear considerable

4. Living with non-Catholic families.

domestic disturbance, they ought quietly to *ask* for abstinence diet, explaining their Catholic duty in this respect. This is to be done, not only out of obedience to the Church law, but to *prevent scandal*, for nowadays, in these lands, people are pretty generally *aware* that Catholics *ought* to observe Fridays at least, and think ill of the Faith on seeing its adherents calmly ignoring its laws. But should a great 'fuss' be made or the request be refused, then there is no obligation to deprive themselves of proper meals in order to avoid eating meat. In the case of governesses and servants, etc., if they run the danger of losing their situations by merely asking for fish, they need not mention the subject. They would do well, as a rule, to look out for another place : but they should **ask** the advice of their confessor on the point.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH PRECEPTS.

No. XXXII.

ANNUAL CONFESSION AND EASTER COMMUNION.

'To go to Confession at least once a year.'

'To receive the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year, and that at Easter or thereabouts.'

THESE two precepts will be more familiar to most under the comprehensive title of 'Easter duties,' though the one enjoining annual Confession assigns no particular season for its fulfilment. It is true that this Confession is commanded in view of the Easter Communion, but it only has a *necessary* connection with the latter in the case of one conscious of mortal sin, and who is therefore strictly bound to confess before receiving his Easter Communion.

I. ANNUAL CONFESSION.

In what sense is this precept to be understood?

For the Church teaches concerning the Sacra-
ment of Penance that it is an institution of *Christ*,
and the confession of sin, consequently, a *Divine*
command; but that Our Lord has limited our
strict duty to the confession of **MORTAL** sins
alone, the self-accusation of *venial* ones not being

Meaning
of this
precept.

obligatory, although lawful and praiseworthy. Yet, in her third precept, Mother Church seems to enjoin yearly Confession wholesale and for *all*, irrespective of the gravity of sins committed. Does she, then, dare to extend the limits of duty beyond the point which her Divine Founder has willed to fix, and lay burdens upon the shoulders of her children which He never imposed? Assuredly not, and hence her theologians, when explaining the present precept, tell us that it is only given *under the supposition* that *mortal* sin has been committed. Thus, explicitly stated, the command would run as follows: 'All shall confess once a year at least, if conscious of having sinned *grievously*.' In other words, the Church merely determines the *time* beyond which *those conscious of mortal sin* may not delay their fulfilment of the Divine precept of confessing it—just as in her First Commandment she declares the practical application of the divine precept to keep the Lord's Day holy.

Though the command to confess once a year only binds those who have offended *mortally*, this limitation can hardly have practical bearing upon the conduct of any worthy Catholic. For who that had not confessed for a whole twelvemonth would dream of receiving the All-holy God in Communion without first cleansing his soul more thoroughly for so stupendous an act by means of the Sacrament of Penance, whether he had sinned mortally or not! As a matter of fact, it is *the usual practice of every observant Catholic* to confess,

not only once a year, but almost as often as he is about to receive Holy Communion—except, perhaps, he be amongst those who are allowed by their confessors to communicate more than once a week.

The precept of Confession applies to *all who have reached the use of reason—i.e.*, about seven years of age. Hence it binds children, even though they may not as yet have made their First Communion. Who are bound to confess annually?

Catholics may choose *any confessor* they please—*i.e.*, that has faculties for hearing confessions of the laity—the old and stricter law of the Church on this point having become *obsolete* by long-established custom. Free choice of confessors.

The ‘year’ may be reckoned either from Easter to Easter, or from January 1 to December 31.

2. EASTER COMMUNION.

All Catholics judged to have sufficient knowledge and instruction are bound *under pain of mortal sin* to receive Holy Communion *at least once a year*, the period assigned for this duty being *about Easter-time*.¹ In Catholic countries, where churches and Obligation of Easter Communion.

¹ Parents, and others having charge of children, should bear in mind that judgment as to fitness for First Communion belongs primarily to the *priest*, and not to them—though the priest will no doubt be wise in using information as to the home conduct of children supplied by those who are constantly with them. Children are sometimes arbitrarily kept back from Holy Communion by the ‘fads’ of those in charge of them, as if that Sacrament were a *reward* for perfection instead of a *means* to it.

priests are plentiful, the usual period extends only from Palm Sunday to Low Sunday, both days inclusive. In England the time allowed is longer, viz., from *Ash Wednesday* to *Low Sunday*, both inclusive, and in some dioceses the time is still further lengthened—*e.g.*, to Trinity Sunday or the feast of SS. Peter and Paul.

Time may
be pro-
longed for
particular
persons.
Putting
off Easter
duties.

It is in the power of confessors, for good reasons, to *prolong* the fixed period for *individual* penitents.

A word is necessary about *putting off* Easter duties till the last moment available—not an uncommon failing. While people living at a considerable distance from a Catholic church may be fairly unable to choose their own time for fulfilling this obligation, it is certain that many needlessly put off the business, with detriment to its devout performance, and to the great inconvenience of the priest and others, particularly in churches where priests are scarce. These stragglers will make a simultaneous rush for the confessional—say, on Low Sunday morning—thus detaining the priest and hence delaying the congregational Mass, not to mention their disregard of the fact that the priest will have to undergo the fatigue of hearing the crowd fasting: no slight matter, especially when spiritual accounts have been unsettled for a whole year. Priests are not wont to grudge labour or inconvenience when *really necessary* for the good of their flocks, but that is one more reason why the latter should avoid causing *quite unnecessary* trouble.

A digres-
sion

And here allow me to stop a moment to correct a mistaken estimate sometimes formed of priestly

duties. Some people seem to look for little less than heroic self-denial from the clergy, all and sundry, and declaim against them in no measured terms should they demur to being turned into a mere convenience. They appear to consider a priest *bound* to attend the confessional at any hour, and under whatever inconvenience a parishioner shall take it into his, or more commonly *her*, head to ask for him. They will even send a brief message or hasty note announcing their coming at such and such an hour, but without leaving the priest time (even if he have the means) for sending a negative reply in the event of a previous engagement, and perhaps come *late* into the bargain, for which they are 'awfully sorry,' of course.

Excessive
views of
confes-
sor's
duties.

Afternoon calls or amusements, five o'clock teas, the saving of a special but short expedition to the church, the unpleasantness of awaiting one's turn outside the confessional—*anything*, in fact, is to such thoughtless folk good enough reason for habitually ignoring the appointed hours, and summoning the priest exactly when it suits them and for their own solitary benefit. *His* convenience, *his* other occupations and duties, *his* meal-times ('when I am sure to catch him at home!'), the daily reasonable relaxation which the Church *supposes* him to have—all these are to count for nothing.

Incon-
siderate
penitents.

Now, such a view of a priest's duties, evidently held by some, is *entirely false* and *devoid of theological basis*. God knows the *real* duties attached

to the care of souls—some endangering life, many drawing heavily on health and strength—are arduous enough for mortal man, without the unauthorized addition of imaginary ones! The priest's responsibilities, like other people's, have their *limits*, and one is that he is under *no obligation whatever* to administer Sacraments when sought for *unreasonably*. The mere fact that I want to confess *now* does not create on the priest's part a duty to hear me *now*, any more than his refusal would furnish just ground for offence, or his absence from home a lawful excuse for complaining all over the parish of his indifference. From what some people say, one would almost imagine it to be part of a priest's duty to stop at home most of the day, and most days of the week, on the chance of someone wanting to go to Confession.

Now, it should be plain to any thinking person that, were any *large proportion* of the faithful to act upon the thoughtless lines here criticised, the fulfilment of a priest's *real* duties to *all his sheep alike* would become a sheer impossibility. The spiritual needs of the many would be sacrificed to the inconsiderate, not to say selfish, 'fads' of a leisured few, who choose to regard the returning of a social call (in the fervent hope, perchance, that the people may *not* be 'at home'), a Saturday *matinée*, etc., as social duties of too sacred and urgent a nature to be omitted or postponed for the sake of receiving Our Lord's Sacraments at the proper hour.

In the case of the well-to-do devout (and, One thing or the other. curiously enough, offenders more commonly belong to this class), surely the sensible thing for them would be to decide beforehand which of the two things they intend to do: to perform social duties, or to go to their *optional* religious ones, and not to attempt both, at the expense of the priests. Yet, strange to say, these good folk would 'strain' at an occasional omission of weekly or fortnightly Sacraments, for some reasonable cause, as being a sinful neglect of grace, which it is *not*, while they can 'swallow' at one gulp their selfishness towards the priest, not to mention possible ill-temper and detraction when balked of Confession, which certainly *is* a fault.

The truth seems to be this, that the vast majority of priests, out of commendable zeal, shrink from strictly urging the limits of their obligation, and constantly put themselves out to indulge the weakness of their sheep. And they are made to suffer for it. That which they do out of the abundance of their charity is demanded by some as if it were a *right*, and any occasional difficulty or protest on the part of the harassed priest is set down to disedifying negligence or sad lack of apostolic zeal.

To protect these remarks from *misconception*, let A caution against misconception. me say that I am far from supposing every single priest to be perfect (that, indeed, seems rather the supposition of those who expect so much of him). Further, I am equally far from preaching the doctrine that a priest need never yield one grain

in excess of the 'pound of flesh' in the matter of confessional duties outside the fixed hours! Even if I did, the zeal very generally to be found among our clergy would refuse me a hearing. My sole object is to point out to such as need the hint, and, moreover, are so circumstanced as to be able to act upon it without considerable hardship, that *moderation in exceptional demands* is a virtue needing more attention than it always receives from some who can well cultivate it. Needless to add, my strictures do not apply to the hard-worked or dependent, any more than to those overshy people who will rather forego most necessary spiritual aid than 'trouble the priest,' however reasonable their cause. The above has been a somewhat long, but I trust not altogether useless, digression.

To resume the thread of our considerations.

Sacrilegious Communion
do not satisfy the
law.

The duty of communicating at Easter-time cannot be satisfied by an *unworthy* Communion—that is, a Communion received in conscious *mortal* sin; for that, and that *alone*, can render the reception of the Body and Blood of Our Lord 'unworthy' in the sense of the Apostle St. Paul,¹ as is clear from the teaching of the Council of Trent: so that in the deplorable event of a sacrilegious Communion, another and a worthy one has still to be made to fulfil the law.

Place for
Easter
Com-
munion.

When dealing with annual Confession, we saw that the law of confessing to a particular confessor no longer held good. The same cannot be said

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 27.

of the law which obliges Catholics to receive Paschal Communion in their parish church. For this regulation still binds in Catholic countries. But as in England (and Scotland) and other missionary countries there are no 'parishes,' in the proper sense of the term, Catholics in these parts satisfy their duty by communicating in *any public church or chapel*.

When anyone has allowed the whole period allotted for Easter duties to elapse before fulfilling them, he must still supply the omission. Such is the commonly received teaching of theologians; and, except he have been honestly prevented, he must confess his culpable omission, which is a *mortal sin*.

With regard to *impediments occurring*, it must be borne in mind that, for a valid excuse, some *more than ordinarily grave obstacle* or inconvenience is required in the present matter.

Those failing culpably to fulfil their Easter obligation are sometimes spoken of as being 'out of their Church'—a popular phrase liable to serious and hurtful misconception. For the offenders do *not* really cease to be members of the True Fold: they have not denied their faith nor become *excommunicated* persons.

They have, it is true, sinfully withheld the *outward proof* of active membership with the Catholic Church demanded of them. Through not being sacramentally incorporated with the *Real Body* of the Lord in Holy Communion, they have failed to *signify* themselves members of His

When
'duties'
have been
missed.

Obstacles.

Defaulters
not ex-
communi-
cated,

But
they are
specially
guilty.

moral body, the Church, of which He is the mystical Head.¹

But it would be an error for such to regard themselves as being in fact no longer Catholics, or to imagine some *special recantation* to be required of them—as though they had apostatized—beyond confessing their sin and supplying the missing Communion.

It seemed expedient to clear up all ambiguity on this point. For though it may be well to characterize neglect of Easter duties in such terms as will serve to express its exceptional gravity, and so foster a wholesome horror of that offence, yet any exaggeration of its spiritual consequences may scare more timid offenders into continuance in sin, under the false notion that they must undergo some severe ordeal in order to right themselves. This is a mistake. No exceptional form of reconciliation is necessary. They have not to be 'received back' with a special ceremony. No more need be done than is required to repair the culpable neglect of *any other* duty binding under mortal sin; that is, the omission must be repented of, confessed, like other mortal sins, to *any* confessor, and at length made good—in this case, by a worthy Communion.

* Paschal
lambs.'

I will close with a reference to those sluggish souls sometimes christened 'Paschal Lambs,' or, more familiarly, 'Hardy Annuals'—terms sometimes applied to people who confine themselves—

¹ Eph. v. 23; 1 Cor. xii. 27.

by *choice*, not by necessity, to one Confession and Communion in each year.

It is, of course, perfectly certain that this much is all they are strictly obliged to *by the laws of the Church*, and no one has any right to call them 'bad' Catholics for not doing more. In a neighbouring land they are even termed '*bons chrétiens*.'

But, strict obligation apart, do such people act wisely in the interests of their souls, feeding them upon such starvation spiritual diet, and behaving as if the Church, instead of *commanding one* Communion a year, had *forbidden more than one*, or declared only one to be *desirable*?

One Communion a year practically means, in nine cases out of ten, but one Confession also. Now, taking human nature on its average, taking life with its average spiritual dangers, trials, and temptations, can it be prudent to content one's self with such sparing recourse to these rich sources of strength and holiness, the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist? For they are intended as our more *ordinary* supports in life's battle against passion and sin of every kind. To the strongly attacked and often vanquished they hold out *practically* the only hope of ultimate victory over sinful habits, if we except the case of those unavoidably hindered from Confession and Communion, whose earnest prayer will suffice instead.

People excuse themselves, at times, on the score of the distaste they have for *Confession*. They

Within
the letter
of the law,

But un-
wise.

Starva-
tion diet

A fallacy.

shrink from the unpleasant task of calling themselves to account for their misdeeds. But is the difficulty likely to be less or greater after a whole twelvemonth's absence from the confessional? It must surely be easier to square up accounts for a month, or for a week, than for a year?

Be ready! How short-sighted, too, this policy of spiritual unreadiness for death! He who confesses more frequently will, if surprised by a fatal illness, so much more easily prepare to meet his God. It will cost him comparatively little to bring his spiritual accounts up to date for auditing at the judgment-seat.

Those of my readers are the wisest who do not content themselves with a bare fulfilment of the precepts we have just reviewed, but who drink copiously of 'the fountains of the Saviour' from those vessels of His Precious Blood—the Sacraments.

THE SIXTH PRECEPT.

No. XXXIII.

CONDITIONS FOR MATRIMONY.

'Not to marry within certain degrees of kindred, nor to solemnize marriage at the forbidden times.'

LITTLE remains to be added concerning the other Commandments of the Church. Of the Fifth, enjoining *support of spiritual pastors*, enough was said under the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue,¹ so I omit that subject here.

There remains the Sixth Precept, relating to matrimony. It forbids two things: (1) Marriage with relatives within certain degrees of relationship; (2) 'solemnizing' marriage during certain seasons of the ecclesiastical year.

I. FORBIDDEN DEGREES OF KINDRED.

It is not my intention to enter at length into the subject of *impediments* to matrimony, but only to touch upon one or two points of more general utility.

When marriage is said to be *forbidden* within certain degrees of kindred, this means, in the case of *some* degrees, that such unions cannot be entered upon *without a dispensation*. There are, however,

What are
'forbidden
degrees?'

¹ See p. 202.

relationships of so close a nature as obviously to prevent marriage together. But in the case of some others people may be dispensed by the Church for sufficiently grave reasons, and rendered capable of matrimony.

Two
classes of
impedi-
ments.

But it is important to notice in this connection that impediments arising from *blood-relationship*, or from a person's *former marriage*, do not merely make matrimony (without dispensation) *wrong*, but, moreover, belong to a class of hindrances which render marriage *null* and *void* as well as grievously sinful; so that the contracting parties do not become true man and wife in the sight of God and of the Church, no matter what the civil laws of the land may say to the contrary. There is, however, another set of impediments which, while making marriage a *sinful act*, do not impair its *reality* as a *valid* union—*e.g.*, when one of the parties is still betrothed to a third person, or has taken a vow of celibacy, or marries in spite of the *just* and *reasonable* objections of parents to the match. Except in Catholic countries, a 'mixed' marriage—*i.e.*, between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic—if contracted without *dispensation*, and consequently without the assistance of a priest to bless the union, would labour under the latter kind of impediment only.¹

¹ Since this was written, the Decree 'Ne Temere' of Pius X., enacting new matrimonial laws, has come into force. Since Easter Day, 1908, in all countries (except for marriages of Germans held in Germany) the marriage of a Catholic, whether 'mixed' or with another Catholic, has been absolutely *null and void*, in conscience and before God, unless

I wrote above, 'no matter what the civil laws of the land may say to the contrary.' This needs explanation.

The laws of the State relating to marriage may be at variance with the laws of the Church, which bind a Catholic's conscience. Such, in fact, is the case to some extent in England—one of the evil results of the Protestant Reformation. The matrimonial impediment of being already married forms a notable example of this. Yet no decree of divorce pronounced by English law-courts can release a baptized Christian in the sight of God from the bond of a previous marriage, nor give freedom to contract another valid union as long as the previous partner survives.¹

Un-Catholic State laws.

Again, a Bill is frequently proposed in Parliament, but hitherto without success, authorizing marriage with a *deceased wife's sister*. Even though this measure were some day to become law, Catholics would still be debarred in conscience from attempting such a marriage, unless they were dispensed. For the union would be null and void. Indeed, one of the reasons urged against the Bill, by those Catholics who oppose it, is precisely the *further* discord it would create between the State laws and those of the Catholic Church.

celebrated in the presence of the proper Catholic parish priest and two witnesses. For fuller explanation, see Vol. iii., p. 140, and Appendix iii., p. 253.

¹ See Appendix, 'The New Testament and Divorce.'

The Church
the sole
guardian
of Sacra-
ments.

What is the Catholic principle underlying this matter? The Church being appointed by Christ the sole guardian and dispenser of His Holy Sacraments, she *alone* has power to declare the conditions for their valid reception. This is contained in her commission to teach the nations. Now, according to Catholic doctrine, marriage under the Christian law is *necessarily* a Sacrament, and no mere natural contract, as it is among pagans. A baptized Christian cannot effect a real marriage without there and then receiving a Sacrament—the Sacrament of Matrimony.

What the
State may
do.

All that the Civil Power can lawfully claim is to settle and legislate for the *civil effects* of matrimony, with regard to property, inheritance, and other temporal matters. It has no right whatever to control the essential *bond* of marriage—a sacramental tie hallowed by the merits of the Precious Blood of Christ—either by declaring what is or what is not a *valid* union, or by pretending to dissolve the same after it has been once contracted. But it may by its own enactments re-enforce the laws of the Church. This is the ideal state of relations between the Church and the Civil Power.

Extension
of for-
bidden
degrees.

The forbidden degrees of kindred, according to the laws of the Catholic Church, extend to the *fourth degree* of relationship by blood *inclusive*. Thus, *third* cousins—*i.e.*, great-grandchildren of brothers or sisters—stand just within the forbidden limits. Here, of course, we have a case of descent in *collateral* lines from a common stock.

But persons coming in the same DIRECT line of descent, no matter how far removed, fall within the forbidden degrees—a question, however, which is hardly of any practical interest.¹

When the relationship called ‘affinity’—springing from a previous valid marriage—exists, the surviving partner to that marriage is incapable of remarrying with a relative of the deceased partner down to the fourth degree inclusive, except by dispensation. The latter is not uncommonly granted (for weighty reasons) when the person with whom marriage is contemplated does not stand related to the deceased partner in the *direct* line of descent.

Matrimonial dispensations are usually negotiated through the priest of the district, who will advise the applicants as to the method of procedure. How to apply for dispensation.

2. FORBIDDEN TIMES.

Notice, there is *no* time when, in England at least, weddings are absolutely forbidden. But from the beginning of Advent till after the feast of the Epiphany (January 6), and from Ash Wednesday till after Low Sunday, they must not be *solemnized*. Reverence for the peculiar sacredness of these seasons forms the basis of these restrictions. Mere marriage lawful at all times.

In what, then, does the forbidden *solemnity* consist? First, and chiefly, in the bestowal of the Nuptial Blessing, or form of special blessing administered to the bride, towards the end of the What ‘solemnizing’ means.

¹ In the Church of England so-called prohibited degrees extend only half as far as the Catholic ones.

Wedding Mass, if there be one, or at the close of the ordinary marriage rite. This blessing is not given in a mixed marriage, nor to a widow on her remarriage. The other forbidden elements of solemnization are great pomp and high festivity in celebrating the wedding.

No one, therefore, has cause to be scandalized at people getting married 'quietly' during the closed times. Of course it would be the priest's business to omit the Nuptial Blessing. That blessing may, and should be, applied for privately later on, except in the two cases above specified. The responsibilities and trials of motherhood suggest the advisability of not lightly forfeiting the grace attached to the devout reception of this blessing.

There are, of course, many other points connected with Christian marriage which might be profitably dwelt upon. But these belong more properly to a treatment of the Sacrament of Matrimony.¹

¹ A series of letters on the Sacraments is now appearing in the *Stella Maris* magazine, *Messenger* Office, Wimbledon.

APPENDICES.

I.

A LENTEN LETTER ON THE GRACE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

ALLOW me to suggest some practical reflections upon a subject in keeping with the ecclesiastical season of penance—Lent. The Sacraments instituted by Our Blessed Lord *necessarily and of their own inherent force* give grace to the soul, provided it put no obstacle by omitting the essential conditions for their reception. At this statement, perhaps a look of half-offended dignity passes across your countenances. ‘The idea of telling us *that!* As if it were not the stalest of stale news!’ Well, dear friends, perhaps you are well instructed enough to be fully aware of the above truth. But it does not follow from this that you fully realize and act up to its obvious *consequences*. For it is of these last that I wish to say a word—and more particularly with reference to the two Sacraments of the Catholic’s everyday life—Penance (or Confession) and Holy Communion. There could hardly be a better time for this than the present, when we are entering upon the season of Lent and preparing for Easter—the period during which a Catholic is bound under mortal sin to approach the Sacraments—or ‘to make his Easter duties,’ as we call it.

1. *The Sacrament of Penance.* — This Sacrament, therefore, necessarily gives grace, provided that *at the*

time of Confession we put the necessary conditions—sincere confession, sorrow, and purpose of amendment. This precious grace consists in the rescue of our souls from death to life—*i.e.*, when grievous sin has been committed, and has turned the soul into a spiritual corpse, only fit for the same dread and ever-conscious burial as that of Dives in the Gospel parable, who was ‘buried in hell.’ Or, if the soul be charged with venial sin alone, Confession stays the spread of the disease, and removes the soul still further from the death of mortal sin.

The benefit of Confession.

What a priceless boon! What a marvellous mercy vouchsafed by the ‘Friend of publicans and sinners’! A whole miserable lifetime, perhaps, of vice and scandal clean blotted out, and a new life of peace and friendship with God begun. Hope, and the sense of painful duty bravely done, in place of remorse of conscience and an inveterate sense of alienation from God. Those few brief moments of bitter humiliation, those acts of sorrow and resolve, those six brief words of the priest, ‘I absolve thee from thy sins,’ make no less a difference than that between eternal heaven and eternal hell! Where could so merciful a means of pardon as Confession, whatever its passing unpleasantness to nature, have been devised except in the Heart of Love!

But now for the practical consequence.

Practical application.

We go to Confession to get *this* grace, and not chiefly for *spiritual direction* or for the comfort of a *sympathetic talk*, however helpful and desirable these may be. Unless we lay well hold of this consequence, Confession will easily degenerate into a mere personal matter between penitent and confessor. So that if sympathy be not mutually established, Confession will be dropped. Though the priest utter not a syllable of his own, see no

need for putting us one single question, discover nothing in our story which imperatively calls for instruction or counsel, yet the great work for which Our Lord instituted the tribunal of Penance is efficaciously done: that is, the soul is cleansed and sanctified by a fresh torrent of the Precious Blood. That Christian altogether fails to realize this—the primary end of Confession—who reasons thus: ‘I have given up going to the Sacraments because the priest generally available never speaks to me a word of sympathy or advice. He just listens, gives me a penance, bids me renew my act of sorrow and purpose, only pronounces absolution, and bids me depart in peace. I cannot even prevent the idea that he is not sorry to be rid of me. Can you, can God Himself, blame me for not going to a priest of this sort?’

Only pronounces absolution! *Only* sends you away in peace! Then, is this so small a benefit as not to be worth the effort of Confession? Why, it is the *primary purpose* of the Sacrament! Any amount of labour and pain would be a small price to pay for recovering, or further adorning, that bright garment of justice which gives me the right to look up to Heaven, and to cry: ‘Abba! Father!’ and for regaining peace for my troubled heart, so long a prey to unrest and bitterness—the fruits of sin. This is not to decry spiritual direction, or words of sympathy and encouragement. The value of both is unquestionable. And yet what guidance given to the penitent by a confessor can compare with that afforded by Our Lord Himself through the gift of absolution, by which the soul is turned back on its way to ruin into the way of Heaven? What sympathy of the kindest priest deserves to be mentioned in the same breath with the sweet and tender forgiveness of the Sacred Heart—conveyed though it be without another word—in the form

of absolution? What hope and encouragement can equal that which springs afresh in the sinner's heart from the consciousness of having put the dark and dreary past behind, at the trifling cost of a little self-humiliation?

We were before spiritually bankrupt: and behold now we are able to start our heavenly commerce anew, backed by the rich capital of the grace received on our repentance, and with all our former supernatural merits, acquired before our fall, generously restored to us. All Heaven resounds with the songs of Angels rejoicing over the sinner who has done penance—and yet the sinner himself is murmuring and desponding because, forsooth, the priest did not speak to him! Foolish soul! Its scant appreciation of the priceless gifts it has just received argues a want of faith in the true nature of Christ's Sacraments. In its penny-wise folly it despises the *substance* of Our Lord's Divine gifts, because it does not get their *accidental perfections*. It refuses the *necessaries* of life because it fails to obtain the *luxuries*!

Effect of
the Holy
Eucharist.

2. *Holy Communion*.—This Holy Sacrament, also, produces its effect infallibly, and of its own force, provided the soul puts no obstacle. The fruit of Holy Communion is an *increase* of sanctifying grace. It invigorates the life of the soul by curing its spiritual ailments. In the Sacrament of Penance Our Lord 'forgiveth all thine iniquities'; in the Blessed Eucharist 'He healeth all thy diseases,' and the soul's 'youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.'¹

The only
disposi-
tion
needed for
this effect.

But when we speak of a thing being *increased*, we imply that it is already substantially existing. We do not say of a beggar who has no money at all, that his store is *increased* when he succeeds in earning a day's wages. Thus, in order to receive that increase of grace

¹ Ps. cii. An appropriate thanksgiving after Confession.

which the Holy Eucharist is designed to give, the soul must be already in grace—'in the state of grace.'¹ It is sinful and a sacrilege to receive Our Lord while *conscious* of a *mortal* sin not remitted by sacramental absolution. But short of *mortal* sin, *nothing can prevent* Holy Communion being essentially 'worthy' and fruitful. Mark well this important *consequence* of the truth we started with. A Communion cannot indeed be worthy in the sense that there is any comparison of dignity or holiness between the receiver and the Divine Guest received. But in this sense Mary, the sinless Virgin Mother of Our Lord, herself was no more 'worthy,' when she communicated after the Ascension of Our Lord, than we are ourselves. No creature can in this sense be worthy of God. But, beyond humbly avowing so obvious a truth, such unworthiness as this need have no practical bearing upon our conduct as regards using or not using Holy Communion. The fact that Our Lord *commands* us to eat of His Flesh and to drink His Blood—that Flesh which is 'meat indeed,' and that Blood which is 'drink indeed'—at once does away with any objection to Communion based upon the *general* unworthiness of *all* creatures in God's sight.

Besides the state of grace, there are, of course, other desirable dispositions of soul: for instance, repentance from venial sin—particularly of the more deliberate and cold-blooded type—devout exercise of the soul in acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, Humility, and ardent desire. These personal efforts of our own may largely

Other
disposi-
tions
recom-
mended.

¹ The Holy Eucharist, like the Sacraments of Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Matrimony, is a Sacrament 'of the living'—that is, those who receive any of these Sacraments must be already *alive* to God through the possession of His grace and friendship.

add to the increase of grace produced by the Sacrament. But even were *every one* of these personal dispositions absent, the Communion would necessarily be *worthy* and *fruitful*. As long as he is free from conscious mortal sin, the communicant, however frail and imperfect, need never fear to fall under the condemnation of St. Paul's words: 'He that eateth and drinketh *unworthily* eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.' The unworthiness here condemned is that of conscious mortal sin.

Objections to Communion dealt with.

Now for another *consequence*, viz. : that the following pleas on which Catholics often excuse themselves from attending the Supper of the Lamb are mere fallacies, and very ruinous ones too.

A. Frequent falls into sin.

A. 'I fall so frequently into horrible mortal sins: therefore I am not fit to receive Holy Communion.'

Wonderful logic! You confess to being very sick of soul, and *therefore* you conclude that the Heavenly *medicine* is *not* for you! You own to being spiritually well-nigh starved to death, and *therefore* you ought *not* to take your Heavenly Food! One need only state the objection in all its naked folly. No further answer is needed. The Holy Eucharist is a remedy for sinners, not a *reward* for saints. For no saint on earth could deserve it *as a reward*.

B. 'I am no better for it.'

B. 'I receive Holy Communion once a month (or once a fortnight): but I so soon relapse into grievous sins. Therefore there is no use in my keeping it up.' Now, how does the following sound: 'I take food once or twice a week: but I simply faint from weakness. *Therefore* I won't eat so frequently!' Man alive! don't you see you need to feed oftener, not *less often*! The answer to the original objection is similar. You fall again so soon in spite of a fortnightly Communion. Then, in the name of common-sense, try once a *week*, or

—with the confessor's advice—oftener still! You relapse the third or fourth day after Holy Communion. Then receive *again* on the *second* or *third* day, and so forestall the devil. By this method St. Alphonsus Liguori completely cured a nobleman who had formed an inveterate habit of vice. But even if you cannot bring yourself to communicate *more* frequently, you may take it for certain that, frail though you be, you would be frailer still were you to receive *less* frequently. Be not deceived. The devil, like a plodding tradesman, is often content with 'small returns,' and will be quite satisfied to have you commit if only *one* more mortal sin than usual, through your diminishing the number of your Communions.

C. 'But surely this Most Holy Sacrament is not to be degraded in this way? Is it to be used as a drug to cure the foul diseases of my soul?' It is always supposed that you prepare yourself by a sincere Confession to receive Our Lord in a *state of grace*. This being understood, there can be no degradation, though there is ineffable condescension on Our Lord's part—or if degradation there be, you at least are not responsible for it. Our Lord has shifted the responsibility on to His own shoulders. In the infinite compassion of His Sacred Heart, with that magnanimous indifference to His own external honour¹ which astounds us so greatly in the events of his Sacred Passion, He has instituted the Blessed Sacrament precisely for repairing the effects of the loathsome leprosy of sin. Penance is the specific for removing the disease; the Holy Eucharist follows as

C. Disre-
spect to
the
Blessed
Sacra-
ment.

¹ 'So that its (*i.e.*, the Holy Eucharist's) primary purpose is not that the honour and reverence due to our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients' (Decree).

a tonic to build up the strength of the soul. Adore His love, marvel at His Divine self-abasement, humble yourself in the very dust on account of your manifold infirmities, but do not add to your other miseries that of leaving His merciful gift of Himself unheeded and untouched. Though you be weary of your sinful life, nevertheless 'rise up and eat.' Do not for ever and aye be viewing things from your own miserable point of view. Look at them a little more from *His* standpoint. Would you—a human being—be pleased or displeased if, after sincerely offering to sacrifice your dignity in order to rescue a fellow-man from misery, the wretch refused to credit you with really meaning it? Our Lord is a man, as well as your God, and by His Incarnation He has made you His fellow-man. On becoming 'our brother and our flesh' He took to Himself a real human heart, sensitive to neglect and suspicions of insincerity. He Himself said: 'Except ye eat . . . ye shall not have life in you.' He *bids* you accept His offer. Refuse not to approach Him in Holy Communion. For, as you desire life, to whom else shall you go? He has 'the words of eternal life.'

D. 'I feel
no devo-
tion.'

D. 'But when I go to Communion, my heart is like a stone. I feel no devotion. I experience no comfort. What good, then, can it do me?' Why, the very good Our Lord intended it to effect—the increase of grace, the renewal of spiritual vigour. This effect is a matter of *fact*, not of feeling and sensible experience. Whatever you *feel* or do not *feel*, you cannot fail to derive benefit from receiving Our Lord in the state of grace. Even if you would, you *could* not prevent the fruit which is reaped from the presence in your soul and body of your God and your Saviour. A word about this absence of devotion and sensible comfort. That may be your

fault, *or it may not*. It *may* be, because it may result from a want of care and effort on your part. An affection for venial sin, or careless preparation, may be the cause. God may reserve the *comforts* (not the essential grace) as a reward for our own efforts, or He may see fit to deprive us of them for a test of our constancy. But *His* work—that is, the work of the Sacrament according to its nature—cannot fail of its effect, though our share of the work (which, of course, needs His assistance) may be deficient. Just as ‘spiritual experiences’ of Anglican communicants do not prove the fact of the Real Presence in their ‘Eucharist’—but at most prove the sincerity of their belief and the earnestness of their devotion—so neither does the *absence* of sensible comfort disprove that Presence and the reality of the essential fruit—the increase of grace—which It produces in the soul of the Catholic communicant.

The moral, then, is as follows. Let us think more of the essential grace which Sacraments produce of their native force, and less of sympathetic confessors and of sensible experiences in Holy Communion. To this end we should do well to pray for an increase of genuine Catholic faith. It is imperfect faith in the means of grace appointed by Our Lord, and too great reliance upon the *human instrument* of His forgiveness in the confessional and upon our own *personal industries* in Holy Communion, that cause all the trouble. The season of Lent will not have been passed in vain if it but lead us in future to use the Sacraments with a truer insight into the nature and purpose assigned to them by Our Blessed Lord.

Attention
to the
main
point.

II.

AGE OF EXEMPTION FROM FASTING FOR
WOMEN.

THE age mentioned in the text of Letter XXI. is *fifty*—*i.e.*, ten years sooner than in the case of men. As this statement may possibly appear new to some—and in one respected quarter it has so appeared—it will be best to submit my authorities; for I have no ambition for figuring as an originator of novel doctrines. Here are the references for the use of theological students: ‘Compendium Theologiæ Moralis’ (Gury-Ballerini), edition 1889, vol. i., pp. 465, 466, in footnotes (a) and ** (or, in earlier editions, V.V.); also *ibid.*, p. 464, footnote (b); also ‘Opus Morale’ (Ballerini-Palmieri), vol. ii. p. 820, No. 84.

In the above passages the whole question will be found thrashed out. That the opinion is *not new* appears from the fact that the Dominican Cardinal Cajetan (A.D. 1469-1534) maintained it (according to St. Alphonsus), and that Thomas Sanchez, S.J. (1550-1610), although he had expressed doubt about it in his *earlier* work, ‘De Matrimonio,’ taught it categorically in his later ‘Consilia Moralia’ (lib. v., c. i., dub. iv., No. 6), and is generally regarded as the representative of this more lenient view. Amongst modern authors and professors of moral theology, Bucerone (‘De Præcept. Eccles.’ vol. i., No. 49) and Génicot (vol. i., No. 445) favour the earlier exemption of women. The late Antonio Ballerini, in note ** or V.V., above quoted,

shows, with his characteristic industry, how all the chief moralists who oppose the milder view are ultimately relying upon Sanchez's earlier *doubt*, apparently unaware of his subsequent unhesitating and more mature judgment.

III.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND DIVORCE.¹

I.

IN starting the above important topic, it should be stated, by way of preface, that this paper is intended mainly as a popular one. Hence, while dealing with the more common difficulties which beset the subject in hand, it will eschew those more subtle problems, based upon textual criticism, which are to be found discussed at length in larger works.

Scant apology can be needed for reviewing the Gospel teaching on Christian marriage at a time when the statistics of English divorce courts reveal such an alarming increase of successful divorce suits, and of that contempt of Christian ethics which produces them. Nor does the evil show itself chiefly among the ignorant and uneducated. It appears unblushingly rampant in the highest classes of English society.

If we seek the origin of so foul a moral plague—threatening the family unit, and hence society itself, with dissolution—we shall soon trace it to a very widespread disregard, not to say defiance, of the express teaching of Christ, the Great Regenerator of human society. Thus, the sole remedy for this hideous disease would seem to lie in a frank return to the Christian ideal of matrimonial relations, which has ever been consistently maintained by the traditional teaching of the

¹ This paper is reprinted from the *Catholic Weekly* by the kind permission of the Editor.

Catholic Church anent the sacramental holiness and irrevocable character of marriage vows. It is in the hope of fostering, in however slight a measure, a deeper appreciation of the sacredness of marriage that these pages are presented to the reader.

The subject of the indissolubility of Christian marriage, when viewed purely from a Scriptural standpoint, presents no inconsiderable difficulty. He especially who regards the Written Word of God as the only and all-sufficient source from which his knowledge of revealed ethics is to be derived, and who therefore discards the notion of an Infallible Church commissioned by the Divine Author of the Scriptures to declare their true meaning, or to supplement their incompleteness from Apostolic tradition, may easily feel perplexed by the problem as to whether or not Christian marriage be indissoluble ; or, if not absolutely so, whether for certain exceptional causes, at least, the nuptial bond may not be loosened, and the separated parties set free to contract new and valid marriages.

In using the term 'valid,' we refer, of course, to validity in the sight of God, and not to mere legitimacy in the eye of the State law, for the legal aspect of marriage is entirely excluded from present consideration. It has, however, an indirect connection with our subject, inasmuch as it may eventually appear that 'rules made absolute' in divorce courts are opposed to the Gospel of Christ, and that the Protestant 'Reformation,' while professing to draw its inspiration from the 'pure' Gospel, has instead adulterated it by legalizing the total dissolution of marriages.

There are many utterances in the New Testament bearing upon divorce, the most important — because presenting, at first sight, greater controversial difficulty—

being the ninth verse of the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. For clearness' sake we translate this notable passage :

TEXT A.—ST. MATT. XIX. 9.¹

ANGLICAN VERSION.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery : and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

DOUAY VERSION.

And I say to you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery : and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

What is the precise force of this declaration ?

The non-Catholic, who defends divorce *a vinculo*—i.e., total release from the marriage tie—and yet would fain have the Gospel on his side, claims that in the first portion of the above text Our Saviour distinctly grants at least one exception to the indissolubility of Christian wedlock.

In his view, Christ says in effect : ‘Any man who marries another woman after dismissing his former wife commits adultery, except the cause of dismissal be conjugal infidelity. But given the latter cause of complaint, the injured husband is truly quit of her, and free to contract a fresh and valid union with another woman.’

On the other hand, as the reader will be aware, the Catholic Church vetoes complete divorce between baptized Christians in all cases and without exception.²

¹ In quotations from the Bible we have used the Anglican version, noting by its side any variants in the Douay version, which alone has authority for Catholics. This is done in order that non-Catholic readers may see that our reasoning in no way depends upon any peculiarity of the Catholic version.

² The decision of the Holy See in the case of Henry VIII. and Catherine of Arragon forms a notable illustration in

Once marriage has been consolidated, she admits of no exception whatever to its inviolability.

To this a non-Catholic might retort: 'Exactly. In this matter, as in others, Rome ignores the Bible. That is just why we protest against her.' How far such an accusation holds will, we hope, appear in the course of these pages.

At the outset of our inquiry concerning the attitude of the New Testament towards total divorce, it must be frankly granted that the interpretation of text A, above quoted, when taken by itself, is somewhat difficult. Considerable excuse can be made for the casual reader who sees in it an exceptional plea for total dissolution of marriage, and for freedom to marry again—at all events, in the case of the injured, or, as the phrase goes, the 'innocent' party. There is a certain obscurity in the text that calls for removal. But in granting this much, the utmost limit of concession has been reached. For it can be clearly shown, even from the words of the same Evangelist in another passage (St. Matt. v. 32), that, whatever else the sacred writer may mean, at all events he does not, and, according to accepted rules of interpretation, cannot, mean to sanction the complete divorce and subsequent remarriage of either party in any case whatever, not even where unfaithfulness has been the ground for the wife's dismissal.

Our present contention, then, is a negative one, namely, that passage A gives no authority to either party for total divorce, nor for a subsequent new marriage, in any case at all. In order to make this

point. Rome preferred to suffer the loss of England to the Church rather than countenance a violation of the marriage bond. By contrast we have Luther and some of his fellow-'reformers' permitting bigamy to Philip of Hesse.

point clearer, the reader is now presented with the other and far plainer text from the same St. Matthew :

TEXT B.—ST. MATT. V. 32.

ANGLICAN VERSION.

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery : and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

DOUAY VERSION.

But I say *to you*, That whosoever shall put away his wife, *excepting the cause of* fornication, *maketh her to* commit adultery : *and he that shall* marry her that is *put away*, committeth adultery.

Now here we have two distinct and perfectly plain doctrinal statements :

1. 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery.' That is to say, the husband who banishes a wife hitherto chaste is held accessory to any fall from virtue on her part that may follow. He is said to 'cause her' to sin—that is, by sending her adrift amid the temptations of the world without protection. Had she previously fallen, and been banished on this account, the husband could not be rightly charged with causing her downfall.

Be it noted how the husband's guilt in the matter is set forth quite separately, and as incurred by the very act of dismissal, and quite apart from any subsequent second marriage which he might attempt. Of this the text makes no mention.

2. 'And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.' Another separate and clear statement. Here the Evangelist—or, rather, Christ Our Lord—deals with a fresh development, a possible sequel to the wife's dismissal : that of her being sought in marriage by some fresh suitor. He declares that anyone attempting to marry her 'committeth adultery'—that is, effects

no real marriage in the sight of God. The suitor may be a single man, and, so far, free to marry her; but the woman put away is not free. She is still a wife, though a disgraced one, and incapable of remarriage.

‘Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.’ Let us put this teaching into the concrete, and work it out to its logical conclusions. John and Mary become lawful man and wife, and for a time all goes smoothly; but after a few years Mary is turned away by John for proved unfaithfulness to her marriage engagements. Yet, according to Our Lord’s express teaching, another man—James, a bachelor—may not marry Mary, the dismissed. Should he do so, he becomes guilty of adultery. But why adultery? For that crime consists essentially in a violation of nuptial ties, and James has none. Why, indeed, if not because Mary has ties, in that she still remains nuptially bound to John, albeit put away by him? So she is still his wife. Moreover, since Mary is still John’s wife, John must still be Mary’s husband. He, therefore, is equally bound to her, and cannot marry another during her lifetime, any more than Mary can take another husband during his.

One cannot conceive of the bond of wedlock except as binding husband and wife mutually. Either John and Mary are mutually bound or neither is bound. If Mary cannot marry James through being still tied to John, then John must be equally debarred from a fresh marriage—say, with Margaret—through still remaining bound to Mary, even though he may have banished her for unfaithfulness. Hence the theory tentatively introduced into England by the Protestant Reformers, and more recently advocated afresh by certain Anglican dignitaries (that the ‘innocent’ party to a legal divorce *a vinculo*—in the present case John—may console himself with a fresh

consort ; while the guilty and dismissed—in our case Mary—enjoys no such privilege), can hardly be commended for its common-sense any more than for its accord with Our Saviour's teaching in passage B.¹

Perhaps, however, an advocate of the 'innocent party' theory might push his argument thus : 'You argue that John—the "innocent party" in the present case—cannot be free to remarry after putting Mary away, for the reason that, according to the Gospel, Mary is denied a like freedom to remarry with James. In support of this contention you urge that nuptial ties must necessarily be mutual, that they cut both ways. Well, I grant you this much : I grant that if John is quit of Mary, Mary must be so far free as to be released from John. But I deny your inference from this—namely, that Mary, if free from John, must share with him the liberty of marrying again with James, a course clearly forbidden by Our Saviour. My point is that the prohibition against marrying James is laid upon Mary simply as a penalty for her guilt, and not because she is incapable of remarriage. The guilty should not benefit by their sin. This is the only reason why James may not take Mary to wife after her dismissal, in spite of her being released from her former husband, John.'

Now, in answer to this reasoning, be it noticed in the first place that the text affords no shred of evidence for the existence of this special penalty laid upon the guilty party to a divorce. But to treat the objection on its own

¹ The same baseless theory figures in a canon of the Episcopal Church of America. At the Boston Convention a laudable attempt was made to alter this canon in a more Catholic sense, but seemingly so as only to abolish total divorce for causes arising after marriage, and not for those secretly existing previously to it—such as the former evil life of either party.

merits. The argument will not bear a moment's scrutiny in view of Our Lord's express statement that a third person's marriage with the dismissed Mary would be adulterous. 'Whosoever shall marry her which is put away committeth adultery.' On the objector's hypothesis (that Mary, though free from John, is still debarred from wedding James as a just penalty for her fall), any disregard on Mary's or James's part of the said penalty would certainly constitute grave disobedience to a penal law. It could not, however, induce the specific guilt of adultery affirmed in the text, but only that of contumacy.

For so long as two parties are free from other marriage ties the union contracted between them cannot be adulterous. Yet that is precisely how Our Saviour qualifies the marriage between a third (free) party with a dismissed wife. Apart from this, the existence of any such privilege to 'innocent parties' would open the door at once to the gravest matrimonial abuses. Besides giving to marriage a temporary character by making it conditional upon the fidelity of spouses, and so, perhaps, impairing the value of nuptial consent, which to be valid must be absolute, the supposed privilege would favour the corrupt designs of secretly faithless spouses; for these would only need to trump up some frivolous charge of misconduct against their partners, and then, in virtue of the said privilege, secure with seeming decency by a second marriage the fruition of long-cherished and unholy loves.

II.

We may now take stock of results hitherto obtained. A wife dismissed, for whatever cause, is still bound to her husband, and cannot marry again during his lifetime. Her husband is similarly tied to her during her lifetime,

no matter what the cause of his complaint against her. What have we here except that very indissolubility of matrimony without exception taught by the Catholic Church? And this, too, logically deduced from St. Matthew, passage B. Nevertheless, as many a non-Catholic objector will have it, St. Matthew, in his other passage, A, does allow an exception—namely, ‘for the cause of fornication’—and, in virtue of the same, re-marriage also. Well, be it so. But what will our opponent have accomplished? He will only have succeeded in placing Matthew, text A, in flattest contradiction with Matthew, text B—an achievement which, as a sincere believer in the Bible, he can hardly view with much complacency. On the contrary, he must feel that a doctrinal inconsistency on so vital a point of morals—deeply affecting the welfare of the social unit or family, and hence the whole of Christian society—overthrows at one blow the entire fabric of Biblical inspiration. Nay, more. Putting inspiration, strictly so called, aside, such a contradiction would even make short work of any Divine approval claimed for the sacred Scriptures. For just as the Holy Ghost—‘the Spirit of Truth’—could not directly inspire the sacred writers with anything but truth (and contradictories cannot make truth), so neither can we think of the Holy Spirit as extending any sort of sanction, even, to conflicting doctrines on one and the same point of Christian morals.

For the purpose of this paper we are forced to suppose for our opponent a Christian believer who, as such, accepts the Christian Testament as at least possessing Divine approval. A man who denied this much would assuredly decline to waste his time in discussing with us what the New Testament taught, or did not teach, about divorce or any other subject. Such an adversary, there

fore, must obviously stand beyond the pale of our present inquiry.

To argue, then, with the believer. Any seeming opposition between the two passages A and B cannot, on due examination, prove to be a real one. There must be some satisfactory way of bringing them into doctrinal harmony. Now, there are two conceivable methods by which this might be effected, either by interpreting the obscurer passage A so as to reconcile it with B (and so with the Catholic doctrine of the absolute inviolability of marriage), or else by explaining B into agreement with A, and, if possible, with that sanction of divorce in an exceptional case which some non-Catholics fancy text A to contain.

We contend that, of these two courses, the former is the more reasonable one—namely, that of bringing A into accord with B and with Catholic teaching. ‘How deliciously cool on your part!’ the non-Catholic critic may naturally exclaim. ‘You start by assuming the truth of your Church’s teaching about divorce, and then calmly proceed to juggle with that awkward text A, so as to make it serve your Romish purposes!’

Not so, my friend. There is nothing arbitrary in this choice of treatment. There are, in fact, two quite solid reasons for this seeming piece of trickery: 1. Remember that texts A and B are by no means the only ones bearing on divorce producible from the New Testament. If they were, it might not be so easy to supply a reason—acceptable to non-Catholics, at least—for interpreting A by B, instead of the other way about. But there are, in fact, at least five other testimonies all confirming the plain teaching of text B, and all hostile to the non-Catholic view of text A to which we are referring. 2. It is an accepted rule of interpretation, suggested, indeed,

by common-sense, that when a writer, while treating of one and the same point, expresses himself in one place somewhat obscurely, but in another quite plainly, the obscurer statement should be understood in the light of the plainer one, and not *vice versâ*.

A simple illustration of this principle may here prove useful. Take an imaginary college regulation like the following: 'Any scholar absenting himself from morning prayers (saving the cause of sickness), and who comes late for breakfast, will be fined 2s. 6d.' In some other authentic document in the same school the rule is expressed differently, thus: 'Any scholar absenting himself from morning prayers (saving the case of sickness) will be fined 2s. 6d. ; and if he shall come late for breakfast he will be fined 2s. 6d.' Some new arrival on reading the first of these statements feels perplexed. 'Do I,' he asks himself, 'incur the stated fine for either of the offences taken separately, or must I commit both in order to be mulcted of half a crown?' An usher explains the point to him: 'That first wording is rather a puzzle, but its meaning will become plain to you by comparing it with the other fuller statement. From the latter it appears clearly that you will be fined for either fault, so that if you commit both breaches of discipline your pocket-money will be shorn in all of five shillings.' The usher explains the more doubtful wording by the more lucid.

Applying this principle to passages A and B, we shall show later that text A is somewhat obscure, and, further, that the obscurity only deepens when the first portion of the text is taken as allowing total divorce in case of conjugal infidelity. On the other side, as we have already seen, passage B is wholly free from vagueness, and comprises two perfectly clear doctrinal assertions

which allow of no exception to the complete indissolubility of marriage taught by the Catholic Faith. Reason, then, demands that we should seek some explanation of A which will make it square with the clearer B.

But it is now time to notice the other five sentences from the New Testament which bear out text B in its total rejection of divorce *a vinculo*.

TEXT C.—ST. MARK X. II, 12.

ANGLICAN VERSION.

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery,

DOUAY VERSION.

And he saith to them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

There is no lack of clearness here. Husband and wife are treated on terms of perfect equality with regard to their mutual bond. If either dismiss the other, both remain tied, and cannot marry again. There is no discrimination of causes for dismissal; no exception to the permanence of their union is so much as hinted. No privilege is offered to the 'innocent party.' For, notice, it is the *dismissing* spouse in each case that is forbidden to remarry—not the dismissed—yet it is the dismissing party that would more naturally be the injured or 'innocent' one. St. Mark, then, confirms passage B from St. Matthew in its condemnation of divorce and of any fresh marriage on the part of either wife or husband.

TEXT D.—ST. LUKE XVI. 18.

ANGLICAN VERSION.

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery : and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

DOUAY VERSION.

Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery : and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery.

This Evangelist also speaks with all plainness concerning the indissoluble nature of wedlock, though in the second member of the verse quoted, like St. Matthew, text B, he vetoes remarriage from the standpoint, not of the husband who banishes, but of some aspirant to the hand of the banished wife. St. Mark, as we have seen, views the matter from the side of the dismissing party. But the practical upshot is the same. The guilty wife is debarred from second nuptials, and hence, co-relatively, no suitor can take her to wife—and this because she still belongs to the man who put her away. The latter, moreover, being still her true husband, lies under the same disability for contracting a fresh marriage. St. Luke drops no hint of any exceptional ground of divorce such as would leave either man or wife at liberty to remarry. He is just as silent as the two other Evangelists about any privilege of the ‘innocent,’ or, rather, he implies that there is none. For, according to the opening words of text D, the husband who dismisses, and is, presumably, the injured party, cannot marry again without adultery

TEXT E.—ST. PAUL, ROM. VII. 2, 3.

ANGLICAN VERSION.

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth ; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, etc.

DOUAY VERSION.

For the woman *that hath* a husband, *whilst her husband liveth is bound to the law.* But if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

Therefore, whilst her husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress, if she be with another man, etc.

What can be clearer? The woman is declared bound to the law (of her husband) while he lives, but is loosed from that law at his death. She is pronounced an adulteress if she be with any man during his lifetime. The statement is a general one. No word about any exception, and yet if any existed the omission would be vital. Death alone, according to St. Paul, can sever the bond of matrimony.

TEXT F.—ST. PAUL, I COR. VII. 39.

In this chapter the Apostle gives a full instruction on the states of virginity and of matrimony. Speaking of the latter, he writes : ‘ A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth, but if her husband die she is at liberty ; let her marry whom she will,’ etc. (Anglican Version).

This passage merely repeats the teaching of the previous text, E.

TEXT G.—ST. PAUL, I COR. VII. 10, 11.

ANGLICAN VERSION.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the woman depart from her husband.

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband : and let not the husband put away his wife.

DOUAY VERSION.

But to them that are married, not I, but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband.

And if she depart that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife.

Here the Apostle speaks of marriage between Christians, as appears evident from the transition, in verse 12, to the case of marriage between a Christian and an unbeliever. In the text before us St. Paul commands the wife in the name of Christ not to 'depart' from her husband. The question arises as to the precise force of the word 'depart'; that is to say, whether it be used in the more exact sense for a *voluntary* retirement—say, on account of the husband's misconduct—or else in the wider sense, for any kind of separation, including dismissal for her own fault. Now, if the departure be voluntary on the wife's part—*i.e.*, on account of the husband's ill-doing—she will usually be the 'innocent party,' and yet, by the command of Christ, she must 'remain unmarried,' which means, obviously, that she may not seek another husband. That the phrase cannot imply a change from a married to an unmarried condition on the wife's part is plain from the alternative to departure, allowed her, that of being 'reconciled' to her husband. Had the bond of wedlock been annulled by departure, it is no mere reconciliation that would be needed, but renewal of the marriage, and under the same supposition the term 'husband' would be out of place.

But let us suppose that the wife 'departs' because dismissed through her own fault. She must 'remain unmarried' (in the obvious sense referred to) on account of being still wedded to her husband. The nuptial tie holds good, then, in spite of departure, and binds husband and wife reciprocally in that neither may marry again while both are alive.

So much for the five additional texts. On reviewing them, we are struck at once by their perfect uniformity. St. Paul (E, F, and G) appears in agreement with St. Luke (D); St. Luke with St. Mark (C); and all of them with St. Matthew in passage B.

Against this mass of unanimous teaching an objector opposes St. Matthew's words in his obscurer passage A. But, surely, anyone who considers the accumulated weight of evidence confirming his plainer sentence B must grant it to be more sensible that we should seek some understanding of text A which will reconcile it with B, and with the other five texts corroborating B, than do violence to all six testimonies—B, C, D, E, F, and G—in order to square them with the solitary A? The case may be put thus: If SS. Mark, Luke and Paul, while apparently condemning total divorce in *all* cases, each and all recognised one case where an outraged husband or wife could escape for good from the degrading incubus of an unfaithful consort, does it not strike one as inexplicable that they should *all* have failed to mention it? Such an oversight would seem almost phenomenal considering the serious issues at stake. Consequently we are led to conclude that *none* of these witnesses—St. Matthew included—acknowledge any exception of the kind. Thus, we are further led to suspect that when, in passage A, St. Matthew gives the proviso 'except for fornication,' whatever else he may mean, he is not allow-

ing a valid exceptional reason for severing the *bond of marriage itself*, a course condemned by all the other writers. Possibly he is broaching some new point of doctrine about matrimonial relations which does not affect the permanence of the matrimonial bond, and which the other writers passed over as being foreign to *their* main purpose, which was only to defend the nuptial tie itself. This suspicion soon passes into conviction on comparing the two statements of St. Matthew, and noticing in text B a satisfactory clue to the chief obscurity in text A.

III.

ANGLICAN VERSIONS.

A.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery.

B.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, *causeth her to commit adultery*: and whosoever shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

The two passages, when thus collated, explain one another. The peculiar Hebrew construction of text A suggests the difficulty as to whether the guilt of adultery on the man's part attaches to *each* of the specified acts taken separately—the same kind of ambiguity that occurred with the first of those two imaginary school regulations given above for illustration. In other words, the reader asks: Does the husband become guilty by the very fact of separating from a faithful wife, or only if he take the further step of claiming freedom and marrying another? A glance at text B removes the uncertainty, for there it is plainly stated that by dismissing his wife he 'causeth her to commit adultery,' and so involves

himself in like guilt. With this clue we are able to discover that the expression 'committeth adultery' in text A does double service. It applies both to him who merely 'putteth away' and to him who 'marrieth another' afterwards. The separate guilt, however, in merely putting away is more fully explained in text B by the phrase 'causeth her to commit adultery' than by the words 'committeth adultery' in text A. In the latter more laconic phrase St. Matthew only affirms shortly the nature of the husband's guilt in dismissing; while in the more explicit phrase, 'causeth her to commit adultery,' he indicates how the husband comes to incur it—namely, by exposing the wife to sin through sending her adrift.

Clearly we have here an important point of doctrine which is quite independent of the further question of release from wedlock and of a second marriage. Yet remarriage on the man's part is also shown to be separately adulterous, since the woman he sends away continues to be his lawful wife, and he, consequently, her lawful husband. That the woman 'put away,' whether rightly or wrongly, has not ceased to be a wife is evident from the further teaching which closes both the compared texts, 'Whoso (or whosoever) marrieth her . . . committeth adultery.' Were the woman free—say, because dismissed for the cause of incontinence—this statement would be wholly unintelligible. For, as we have previously urged, if she be no longer tied, how could it be adultery for another (free) man to marry her?

The truth is that St. Matthew's teaching about the separate unlawfulness of simple dismissal, save for the cause of unfaithfulness, forms a special point of his own, and one which does not so much as touch the question of total divorce or of remarriage.

The other writers, on the contrary, pass over this particular aspect of matrimonial relations, and confine

themselves to defending the inviolability of the nuptial bond itself; and since they allow no exception to the same, the clause ‘except for fornication,’ needed by St. Matthew for his purpose, does not appear in their teaching. It is conspicuously absent from texts C, D, E, F, and G.

Now we can perceive that when St. Matthew, in text A, puts in his saving clause, he is delivering, though with less clearness, the same doctrine about separation which he expresses more lucidly in the opening of passage B. The involved character of text A produces on the reader’s mind a first impression of an exception to the general unlawfulness of total divorce, whereas, in fact, it only declares an exception to the general unlawfulness of *separation*. The following paraphrase of A may help to show its uniformity with B: ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for incontinence, incurreth the guilt of adultery (by occasioning it in her); and *in all cases*, if he marry another during her lifetime, he likewise committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her that is put away also committeth adultery.’ This exposition of text A stands fully justified by passage B and by the teaching of the other three writers reviewed above.

To sum up. Three ways are pointed out in which adultery would be committed:

1. By a husband’s co-operation in his wife’s adultery through sending her away, and so exposing her hitherto untarnished virtue to a stain. He thus becomes accessory to her guilt.

2. By a man’s marrying another woman during the lifetime of his wife, whether the latter be justly put away or not.

3. By a free man’s marriage with a dismissed wife—or marriage with a *divorcée*.

It need hardly be added that the above restrictions

apply conversely to the case of a wife who puts away her husband.

The first of the above heads is special to St. Matthew, and allows one ground for *mere separation*, which a husband may adopt without being held responsible for any subsequent misconduct of his wife. The two remaining heads are common to SS. Mark, Luke, and Paul, who set forth from various points of view the indestructible character of the bond of marriage, allowing no exception.

It is now time to examine text A more closely than we have yet been able to do. This passage has been referred to as obscure, ambiguous, and the like. Such epithets are justified only when the text is viewed apart from others contained in the New Testament. Moreover, in so speaking we were considering matters rather from the standpoint of a non-Catholic, who recognises no Infallible Church as his guide to the meaning of the Scriptures, and has only his more or less enlightened private judgment to rely upon. Then, too, the obscurity to him, if an Englishman, may partly spring from a prepossession of mind in favour of divorce created by the actual condition of his country's laws, the outcome of the so-called Reformation. Thus, on reading text A under the said influence, he hastily interprets St. Matthew's saving clause as an authority for complete divorce in a particular case. But, as we have already said, such a proceeding results in making St. Matthew flatly contradict not only the other three writers, but himself as well in each of the two passages cited from his Gospel.

Take passage A. If its first portion, or 'member,' be supposed to grant complete divorce and freedom to remarry in an exceptional instance, its second member virtually excludes divorce in *all* cases, without exception.

Let us see that this is so. The second member of A absolutely condemns marriage with divorced people in all cases. 'Whoso marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery.' Whoso—that is to say, anyone at all. The cause of banishment may have been the woman's unfaithfulness, and, as St. Matthew implies, this might justify separation. As the non-Catholic reads the first member of A, the husband would then be free to marry again. Now, if the husband have this liberty, so must the wife. The husband could only be free to take another wife on the supposition that his previous one had now ceased to stand to him in that relation, and was, in truth, no longer his wife, and he no longer her husband. Then surely the woman must also be free and capable of a fresh union. This is the inevitable consequence of the non-Catholic position towards the first member of the text. But then, as we have said, this consequence flatly contradicts the second member of the text which charges with adultery any (free) man attempting to marry the woman. Thus are we landed in a patent contradiction. The non-Catholic understanding of the first part of A makes the dismissed woman *free*, for her husband is. On the other side, the second part of A leads to the unavoidable inference that the said woman is *not* free, for no man may marry her !

In mere consistency, therefore, we are forced to fall back upon the teaching of the Catholic Church that neither husband nor wife may contract a fresh marriage, and that total divorce stands universally condemned by the words of Christ.

Thus, the Catholic doctrine, so far from superseding the Bible, shows itself to be the only one that harmonizes with the Scriptures, and at the same time puts them out of conflict with themselves. It is, in truth, indispensable for bringing into accord the various instruc-

tions on marriage and divorce delivered to us in the pages of the New Testament.

Another argument—based upon the context in which passage A occurs—may now be suitably developed in disproof of the non-Catholic view that Christ intended to sanction total divorce, at all events for an exceptional cause.

In order to appreciate the full drift of Our Lord's teaching, it will be necessary to review briefly His whole reply to the Pharisees on the subject of the Mosaic 'bills of divorce,' recorded by St. Matthew in the verses of the nineteenth chapter which immediately precede A. The italics, needless to say, are the present writer's. The Douay Version, which presents no material differences, is omitted for the sake of brevity.

ST. MATT. XIX. 3 AND FOLLOWING VERSES
(ANGLICAN VERSION).

3 The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for *every* cause?

4 And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them in the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife : *and they twain shall be one flesh ?*

6 Wherefore they are *no more twain*, but one flesh. What God hath joined together, let no one put asunder.

7 They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts *suffered* you to put away your wives : but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And *I* say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, etc.

In verse 3 the form in which the Pharisees put their captious question deserves notice : 'Is it lawful . . . for

every cause?' From this it appears that the tempters entertained no doubt as to the lawfulness of dismissing wives for *some* causes. Hence they are inviting Our Lord to say whether all the causes in vogue at the time were valid or not. In verses 4 and 5, Christ, in reply, begins by tracing marriage to its first institution, insisting strongly upon its indissoluble character: 'They are no more twain, but one flesh,' and, 'What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.' But it is specially noticeable that He does not enter into any distinction of causes for repudiation. He simply ignores the request to discriminate between cause and cause. Now, is Our Lord really condemning *all* divorces *a vinculo*? The Pharisees, who hear Him, evidently understand that He is, for they proceed to ask (verse 7), 'Why, then, did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?'—showing by this change of ground that they feel themselves thrown back upon a defence of the very principle of divorce itself, and that there is no longer any question as to difference of causes. They are now inquiring about the whole system of divorce as practised under Moses, and, as the Pharisees averred, at his command. Christ unmasks the insincerity of his questioners, pointing out that Moses had 'commanded' no such thing as divorce, but had only tolerated the repudiation of wives in despair at the Jewish 'hardness of heart.' Thus, from the whole trend of the dialogue it is evident that Our Lord is not condemning the insufficiency of certain grounds for divorce or their excessive number. He goes further in the path of reform, and censures the entire practice of divorce as an abuse. In other words, He universally does away with total divorce itself, regardless of alleged causes. But what is Our Lord's attitude towards remarriage after divorce?

In the Mosaic divorces it was customary to hand the document, or 'bill of divorcement,' to the rejected wife with the following declaration : 'Receive a bill of repudiation, and be thou cast away from me, *and permitted to any man*' (Maldonatus, Tom. I., p. 257 ; Moguntiaë, 1862). Thus, whatever the cause of repudiation, the 'bill' carried with it *freedom from the former bond of marriage*. It is, clearly, to this very 'bill,' involving freedom, that the Pharisees appeal in defence of their practice of divorce ; and hence it must be this same bill and this same freedom from nuptial ties that Christ goes on to denounce in verses 8 and 9. But His re-enactment of the primitive inviolability of marriage, as against the introduction of divorce under Moses, is more forcibly expressed in St. Matt. v. 31, 32 : 'It hath been said [*i.e.*, under Moses], Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But *I* say unto you, Whosoever putteth away his wife . . . causeth her to commit adultery,' etc. (text B). By thus contrasting what 'hath been said' with what He Himself says, Our Lord plainly abrogates as a sinful abuse the Jewish 'bill' of repudiation, together with its accompanying freedom to remarry. Nor does He stop here ; He even curtails a husband's liberty even to separate from his wife, convicting him of connivance at her adultery if he dismiss her for any other cause than unfaithfulness.

How, then, can it possibly be maintained that Christ countenances complete divorce in any shape or form, when He even refuses to sanction separation, one cause alone excepted ?

And now to bring this paper to a close. The following argument was once put to the present writer : 'True,' said the objector, "no *man*" can "put asunder," but

God can.’¹ Now, such a plea, if taken merely as asserting the absolute power of God to modify His own institution in particular cases, may be granted without hesitation. It is, in fact, a truism, though surely an irrelevant one for any sincere believer in the Christian Revelation. For since Revelation tells us what God has *actually chosen* to ordain, it is futile to set up against His known decrees, concerning matrimony or any other point, that which, absolutely speaking, He might or could ordain. Possibility must always yield to fact, and Revelation is a question of *fact*—a simple truth which, if more generally appreciated, would clear up many an objection to Catholic teaching based upon antecedent necessities and possibilities. God could, and might, do many things otherwise than He has done, but He has not so willed. Much of what He has decreed He had no need to decree, but He chose to do so. His actual will concerning matrimony, made known to men through the teaching of His Divine Son, is that no one shall dissolve the bond of Christian marriage.

But perhaps the above contention had a different sense. Its author may have meant that, whenever a husband or a judge decides for a divorce, the decision is *ipso facto* simultaneously ratified in Heaven. If this was the meaning of my interlocutor—and probably it was—then it must be confessed that his theory makes far too large and arbitrary demands upon our credulity. For it virtually asks us to believe that, just as Christ declared to Cephas, ‘Whatsoever thou shalt loosen on earth shall be loosened also in Heaven,’ so He must have given a similar, but far wider, power (only without mentioning it) to every jealous husband and to every judge who effects

¹ This fallacy was once more brought forward by a reverend speaker at the London Diocesan Conference, May, 1905.

a divorce. A far wider power—for no successor of St. Peter in the Roman See has ever claimed to dissolve a validly contracted and *completed* Christian marriage.¹ Moreover, that perfect solidarity between the Divine Will and that of the divorcing parties, which the theory implies, has the serious drawback of being quite incapable of verification, except, perchance, in the inner consciousness of the aforesaid human agents. Such a contention, therefore, may be justly relegated to the realm of purest fancy. Or should we not rather see in it the forlorn hope, the last pitiful resort, of a carnal world striving, *per fas et per nefas*, to shake off the moderate restraints imposed upon its sensuality by the express teaching of Our Lord? Not one shred of evidence for such a view can we discover in the Christian Testament, but plenty and to spare for the complete indissolubility of Christian marriage, of which the Catholic Church has alone, and always, been the stout and consistent champion.

We may therefore fairly meet our objector with the trite axiom of the Schools: 'That which you affirm without proof I may without proof deny.'

¹ The reader should bear in mind the important difference between *declaring a marriage to have been null and void from the beginning*—on account of some essential flaw in the contract, and *dissolving a completed marriage* which was originally valid. It is this last that the Holy See never consents to do for any consideration whatever.

IV.

PARTICULAR VOWS.

Difficulty
of dis-
pensation.

By way of supplementing the brief remarks made in Letter XV. on 'Vows,' regarding the great caution to be observed in assuming these additional obligations, it may be added that the *perpetual* Vow of Chastity and that 'Of Entering Religion' (*i.e.*, of becoming a religious) are not easily dispensed by ecclesiastical authority. Even when the Church deems relief from these promises to God advisable for serious reasons, some other obligation—perhaps a life-long one—is substituted in their place in order to compensate the Divine honour for the failure of the original promise.

While upon this subject, it may be useful to explain somewhat more in detail the precise obligations attached to the two kinds of vows here mentioned, since they are the ones more likely to be contemplated by people living in the world.

A.
Chastity.

A. *Vows relating to Chastity.*—I say 'vows *relating to* chastity' rather than 'vow of chastity,' because there are three species of vows connected with the above angelic virtue, which are apt to be confused together—viz. :

1. The Vow of Chastity, strictly so called. 2. The Vow of Virginity. 3. The Vow of Celibacy. A few words about each of these.

1. Vow of
Chastity.

1. *Vow of Chastity*, strictly so called. This is the most perfect of the three. It binds (*a*) to the observance of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments *by a fresh and self-imposed tie*, so that any breach of either Command-

ment becomes in virtue of the *vow* a *twofold sin*: one against the aforesaid Commandments, and another against *religion* (under the *Second Commandment*). In the case, however, of a person in the world, the sin against religion will not possess the aggravation of *sacrilege*. It is also to be noted that, though the offence be double in number, the two guilts do not coalesce so as to make a *mortal sin*, if the breach of the Commandments in question be not in itself grievous. In other words, the mere fact of the person being under vow does not make the guilt of his offence mortal. The *gravity* of each element in the twofold sin will be according to the gravity of the fault *against the said Commandments*. Thus, to take an example: Some negligence in resisting a temptation against the virtue is a *venial sin* against one or other of the two Commandments in question for a person *not* under vow. In the case of one who *is*, there will be *two venial sins*, the vow adding a venial sin against religion. (b) The private Vow of Chastity (*i.e.*, as taken in the world) also makes marriage *unlawful*. It does not make it *invalid* (null and void), as would the *solemn Vow* of Chastity taken in some religious Orders, and as also involved in the Subdiaconate.

2. *Vow of Virginity*.—Though sometimes confounded with the Vow of Chastity, this vow is really distinct from it—*i.e.*, taking Virginity in its technical sense. In this sense, Catholic theology teaches that the Spotless Mother of Our Lord was a Virgin *before* becoming a Mother, *in* becoming a Mother, and *for ever afterwards*. The instances of Mary and Joseph and of their imitators, St. Pulcheria, Empress, and Marcion, show that a Vow of Virginity is not incompatible with the marriage contract. But, obviously, such a form of matrimonial life, besides requiring the free consent of both parties,

2. Vow of Virginity.

needs exceptional graces—in fact, a kind of special vocation.

The
virtue as
disting-
guished
from the
vow.

We are at present speaking only of obligation *under the vow*. But if we consider the *virtue* for the sake of cultivating which a person takes the vow, it is evident that there is practically no difference, *as virtues*, between Chastity and Virginity. The purity of heart and of conduct belonging to these *virtues* is indistinguishable.

3. Vow of
Celibacy.

3. The *Vow of Celibacy* only obliges a person *not to enter the married state*, and is the least perfect of the three vows under review. It is violated by marrying.

Celibacy
of Clergy
—a
stricter
vow.

Here it should be borne in mind that the celibacy *of the clergy*, as demanded by the discipline of the Western (or Latin) Church, is no mere simple vow not to marry, such as we have just been considering. For, the cleric who receives ordination as Subdeacon takes not only a perpetual Vow of Chastity, strictly so called, but a *solemn* one to boot—*i.e.*, one publicly accepted in the eye of the Canon Law of Holy Church, and forming a *nullifying* impediment to matrimony, which the simple Vow of Celibacy taken by a lay person would not. This effect of Sacred Orders is defined by the Council of Trent, so that those who have received such Orders are rendered *incapable* of lawful wedlock, saving dispensation by the Church. Such dispensation has rarely been given by the Holy See, and never except on condition of complete retirement from the ministry.

B.
Religion.

B. *Vow to Enter Religion*.—It will not be necessary to discuss at length the various circumstances which invalidate from the outset the act of some rash young person who, in an access of spiritual elation or terror of conscience, or under strong external pressure, vows on the spot to become a religious. Suffice it to say that freedom of *prior* duties, *full* deliberation, as well as

freedom from compulsion, are essential for a valid vow. Or, more shortly, a vow, besides having for its subject-matter something spiritually *better in the circumstances*, must have the character of a perfectly *free* act.

This Vow 'of Religion,' as it is more briefly called, may be taken in varying forms. To give concrete examples :

Forms of
the vow.

Camilla, thinking that God designs her for a more perfect life, vows to apply for admission into a convent in order 'to try her vocation,' as she says. Once she has tried, and either been refused straightway, or has left after a trial under advice, or has gone of her own accord, because she found the life too irksome and harder than she expected, Camilla has fulfilled her *vow*, and is no longer bound to it.

Concrete
examples
(1).

Lucilla's case, on the other hand, is different. *She* promises *to become a religious*—meaning that she will, as far as lies with *her*, go through the necessary probation, and eventually become a vowed religious for good and all. To be a nun in the fullest sense forms the subject of her vow. Now, here the obligation contracted is more extensive. One attempt ending in failure is not sufficient in Lucilla's case, nor will any *ordinary* difficulties or trials, such as are incidental to every form of religious life, justify her in abandoning her intention. Theologians tell her she is bound to make a *moderate* effort to succeed, and to try *once or twice* more before she can be quit of her engagement. But if Lucilla can only obtain admittance into a convent outside her own country, she will seldom (as being a woman) be bound to this. As a matter of fact, should Lucilla, at her first attempt, have reached the point of being 'clothed' (*i.e.*, receiving the habit as an unwowed novice, after probation or postulanship), her further applications for

Concrete
examples
(2).

admittance elsewhere are most likely to prove abortive, owing to the objection commonly (though not universally) entertained against candidates already partially trained in other Orders or Congregations.

Again, since Lucilla's vow was specifically directed to one particular Order, she will not usually be bound to seek out another convent of that same Order, especially if it be an Order in which subjects are moved about from one house to another, for the step would generally be futile. Hence, under ordinary circumstances, she will fulfil her vow by one application. Or, if she vowed to enter a particular *convent*, she will on her failure be entirely free. Thus, for example :

Petronia vows to enter St. Odila's Convent, Axtown. She applies, and in due course is 'clothed.' But when the novelty of things begins to wear off, the trials of the novitiate begin to make themselves felt, and Petronia contemplates leaving. Then, remembering her promise to become a vowed religious, she shrinks from departing of her own accord. So, instead, she aims at forcing Superiors to get rid of her by general carelessness of conduct and taking no pains to amend her faults. In the end she is kindly told that it will be better for her to go home.

Now, since the limits of a vow are just what the person chose to make them at the taking, and Petronia limited her vow to a particular convent, dismissal from the latter puts an insuperable obstacle to the fulfilment of her promise to God. The vow has now become impossible, and so ceases to bind her. But the obstacle was wilfully and designedly put by herself. In this she has sinned. It would have been different had she failed merely through human weakness in an *honest* effort to qualify for religious profession.

In speaking of sin, it must be remembered we are supposing a *vow of religion* to have been made. Otherwise, there is no *sin* in a novice leaving of his, or her own accord, even though possessed of what is called a true vocation. In the latter case, however, there would be great spiritual folly, and, it might be, much trouble to suffer through a lifetime, on account of having taken a path in life other than that which God's good Providence had designed, and prepared at its every stage with an abundance of helps and graces. Still, it remains true that, speaking generally, no one is bound under pain of sin to become a religious. That most perfect state of life is not *commanded*, but only *counselled* by Our Lord to those who, aided by His grace, are equal to it. 'He who can take it, let him take' (Matt. xix. 12).

Religious
life other-
wise free.

Moreover, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find an individual case where even from accidental and personal reasons religious life could be really *necessary* for bare salvation. Hence, *previous* to the taking of the three Religious Vows, it cannot be a sin to abandon, while free, that which one was not bound under sin to take up.

But is it not a wicked *abuse of grace* to decline a real vocation? Is this not resisting the will of God? How, then, can there be no sin? Abuse of grace is not distinguishable in practice from the non-performance of that with a view to which the grace is given. So that guilt in omitting the act will depend upon whether that act is *commanded* or only *advised*. Should it be only the latter, the abuse of grace involved will be at most a *lack of perfection*, but not a sin. The same principles apply to the execution of the Will of God. There is the divine Will *commanding*, as in the case of the Commandments, but there is also the 'beneplacitum

Objections:
'Abuse of
grace.'

divinum' (God's good pleasure), of which St. Paul seems to speak : ' Be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, the *acceptable*, the *perfect* will of God ' (Rom. xii. 2).¹

¹ See p. 8 of this Series.

V.

PARENTS AND FIRST COMMUNION OF CHILDREN.

SINCE the first appearance of the present volume, Pope Pius X. caused a decree to be issued to the whole Catholic Church enforcing the true interpretation of the old ecclesiastical law¹ concerning the duties of Confession and Communion. This authoritative pronouncement, known as the Decree 'Quam Singulari,'² deals mainly with the age at which children begin to be bound under pain of sin to receive the Holy Eucharist, at all events at Easter, and with the conditions for their doing so.

One of the Papal rulings contained in this disciplinary decree runs as follows :

'IV. The obligation of Confession and Communion, binding the child, falls principally upon those who have charge of it—that is, upon the parents, confessor, teacher, and parish priest. To the father, or whoever holds his place, and to the confessor, it belongs, according to the Roman Catechism, to admit the child to its First Communion.'

This rule, therefore, throws upon the responsible persons mentioned the main burden of seeing that a child makes its First Communion *at the age* and *under the conditions* prescribed by the law of the Church, as explained in the 'Quam Singulari.' So let us see what the decree lays down concerning these two points.

The *age* for Confession and for First Communion is 'the age

¹ Council of Lateran, IV., A.D. 1215.

² Approved August 8, 1910.

of discretion,' or 'the age at which the child begins to use its reason'—that is, 'about its seventh year, or later, or even sooner' (Rule I.).

Thus, it is the dawning of reason, and not any fixed number of years, which is to decide the time when a child begins to be bound under pain of sin to receive Communion (at Easter), as well as to make Confession. Discretion—in the moderate measure above implied—will, of course, come earlier or later, according to the speed of the individual child's mental development. Even in these northern climes, one not unfrequently meets with children of five or six who exhibit clear symptoms of reasoning power. The decision as to whether the child has reached the use of reason lies between the father—or whoever holds his place—and the child's confessor (Rule IV.).

The *conditions* for suitable preparation before First Communion are, according to the decree, that the child should know the religious truths *essential for salvation*; that is, it must grasp—but only 'according to its capacity'—the truth of the Holy Trinity; the Incarnation of God the Son and His death on the Cross for our redemption; and that God is the Rewarder of the good and Punisher of the wicked. As regards the Blessed Sacrament, it is enough, we are taught, if the child 'distinguishes the Eucharistic bread from common and material bread, so as to approach the Holy Eucharist with such devotion as befits its age' (Rule III.). Thus we see that 'a full and perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine is not necessary for First Confession, nor for First Communion. But the child must afterwards gradually learn the whole Catechism in the measure of its capacity' (Rule II.). The moderate demands of the Church conveyed by the expressions 'according to its capacity,' 'as befits its age,' and 'in the measure of its capacity,' should be well noticed.

The duty, however, of parents, and of others in charge, does not end with admitting the child to its First Communion in concert with the priest to whom it makes its confession. They must besides 'take the utmost care that after their First

Communion the said children should approach the Holy Table very often,¹ and, if it be possible, even daily, as Jesus Christ and our Holy Mother Church desire it, and that they do so with such devotion of soul as their age allows' (Rule VI.).²

The Holy See further bids those in charge of the young to 'remember the most grave duty incumbent on them of seeing that the children are present at the public lessons in Catechism, or of supplying this religious instruction in some other way' (Rule VI.).

Here the convert has in substance the duties of parents, and others with regard to the First Communion of little children—their honoured part in 'suffering' little children to come to the Divine Lover of their innocence and candour.

To this one may add that in these precocious days the Eucharistic training of small children may with profit be begun very early. It may be greatly forwarded from infancy by accustoming them to the church, the altar, the tabernacle, the light burning before the latter, and by taking them to Benediction, explaining to them, when they begin to question, why the altar is lighted up, what the priest is doing when the bell rings, or, at Mass time, when he gives something to the people at the rails, and the like.³

What is the object of such early First Communion? That Christ may enter and possess these young hearts before sin does, and may strengthen them against temptation with the Bread of Life. That as soon as a child becomes capable of using its reason in order to sin, it may have given to it at once 'the antidote by which we are delivered from daily (venial) faults, and are preserved from deadly sins.'⁴ And if it should

¹ *Sæpius* (Latin text).

² See *Parents and Frequent Communion of Children* (Sands and Co.); also 'Children's Health and Frequent Communion,' article in the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* (for England), August, 1909.

³ 'Eucharistic Training of Children,' in *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, August, 1910. See also *The Bread of Children*, a child's book of Eucharistic instruction, in large type and illustrated. (*In the Press.*) Burns and Oates, London; 6d.

⁴ Council of Trent.

seem to us irreverent to give the Most Holy Eucharist to little mites who have but a partial understanding of its untold sacredness, we must recall the fundamental teaching of the earlier decree 'On Daily Communion.' There we are taught that Our Lord's chief purpose in giving Himself as our spiritual Food is *not* 'that the honour and reverence due to Our Lord may be safeguarded,' but that the needs of our weak and sinful souls may be supplied. The words are: 'That they (the faithful) may thence derive strength to resist their sinful passions, to cleanse themselves from daily' (venial) 'faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable.'¹

Hence the later decree, 'Quam Singulari,' is only the natural development of the earlier one. It merely applies to the case of little children the selfsame principle—namely, that Our Lord, in the great love and humility of His Sacred Heart, willed the use of Holy Communion to be governed not so much by consideration for His own honour and dignity—any more than was His Sacred Passion—but rather by man's dire need of this 'Divine Remedy.'

And—as the recent decree virtually argues—if He so graciously willed this even for the penitent soul with a sinful past behind it, how much more must He desire to enter the innocent and unspoilt souls of those little ones whom, while on earth He delighted to have round Him, to caress, to bless, and take to His holy embrace!

It is, then, the sacred duty and the high privilege of those who hold these precious souls in trust for Jesus, to give Him the earliest possible possession of them in Holy Communion, and, by exact compliance with the Papal commands, prevent His being forestalled by Satan. 'Herein,' writes Cardinal Gennari, 'lies the most efficacious means for saving youth, and reviving the Christian spirit in human society.'²

The 'Quam Singulari' is no mere pious exhortation. It is

¹ Third paragraph of the said decree.

² *Monitore Ecclesiastico*, September 30, 1910.

in substance nothing less than an authoritative explanation by the Church of God of an old ecclesiastical law, binding under sin, but which has come to be imperfectly understood. Moreover, that old law, 'still in force,' is itself an authentic interpretation of a *Divine* command to receive the Blessed Eucharist : ' Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.'¹ The Church—the appointed interpreter to us of the will of Christ—tells us how often, when, and under what conditions, that Divine precept must be fulfilled. But for her teaching we should be left in doubt—like those who rely upon the Bible *only*—regarding a matter which Our Lord distinctly puts as a condition for keeping in His grace and gaining eternal life.

P.S.—The above being only a partial survey of the decree, the reader is recommended to study the whole document, now to be had in English.

¹ John vi. 54.

INDEX

ABBREVIATIONS, SIGNS, METHOD.—The Arabic numerals refer to *pages*, not to the numbers of 'Letters' or chapters.

f. placed after the page number = see footnote.

ibid. = same page—*i.e.*, as last mentioned.

In the case of supplementary or cross reference the page is generally given, to save sending the reader to another part of the index. If, however, the treatment of the point sought for extend over several divisions, the index heading is also added, to which the said point belongs, and under which its various divisions will be found set forth in detail.

For the main divisions of this work, according to chapters or 'Letters,' see Contents at the beginning of the volume.

N.B.—The following index, besides being generally useful, might serve for preparing an instruction to others on a given subject. The instructor might take a given main heading for his subject, and use the subordinate heads as points for explanation; or, again, a reader, having his own personal improvement in view, might select some main heading connected with his or her duties or position in life and reflect upon the points included under it.

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